



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

OPERATIONAL UPDATE GUATEMALA

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2025

Population figures



REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN
GUATEMALA



● Funded ● Unfunded



FUNDING AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

USD 37.9 million

requested for the Guatemala situation

Jose, a Guatemalan refugee who works as a park ranger, has found his version of belonging through the beauty of nature ©UNHCR/Victor S.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Guatemala, a multiethnic and multilingual nation, plays a pivotal strategic role in regional migration dynamics as a country of origin, destination, and return. In recent years, Guatemala has faced increasing displacement driven by violence, weather-related disasters, and economic instability, affecting both cross-border and internal movements.

In September 2025, Guatemalan authorities released the first official figures on internal displacement, based on data from the 2023 National Survey (ENCOVI), reporting 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), a number expected to rise. Mixed movements remain steady, characterized by growing asylum claims, expanding reverse flows, and frequent large-scale returns.

Most asylum-seekers are under 30 years old, traveling alone or with families from Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Internally displaced populations share similar demographics, with Indigenous communities disproportionately affected by disasters and violence. Returned Guatemalans often face reintegration challenges, particularly when relocated to unfamiliar areas.

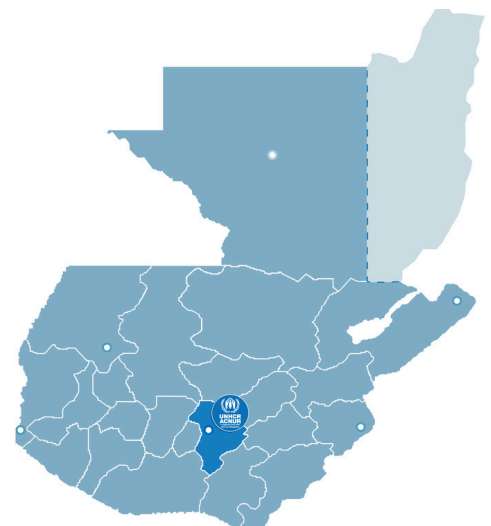
Humanitarian needs remain high. Host communities are under increasing pressure, often with limited resources. Protection challenges include restricted access to healthcare, education, shelter, and documentation, especially in remote areas.

Despite these challenges, Guatemala continues to foster inclusive development, disaster preparedness, and regional solidarity. Initiatives such as Cities of Solidarity and mobile units have expanded access to essential services for vulnerable populations. The government has made significant strides in strengthening asylum and protection systems, decentralizing services, and expanding programs in coordination with UNHCR and key partners. Technical and financial support remains essential to ensure the sustainability of these efforts. UNHCR supports Guatemala's protection agenda by:

- Enhancing asylum procedures.
- Promoting local integration and durable solutions.
- Providing technical assistance to develop legal frameworks on displacement and statelessness, thereby strengthening national protection capacity.



Students from Ak'Tenamit, an educational and community development center located in Livingston, Izabal ©UNHCR Victor S



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

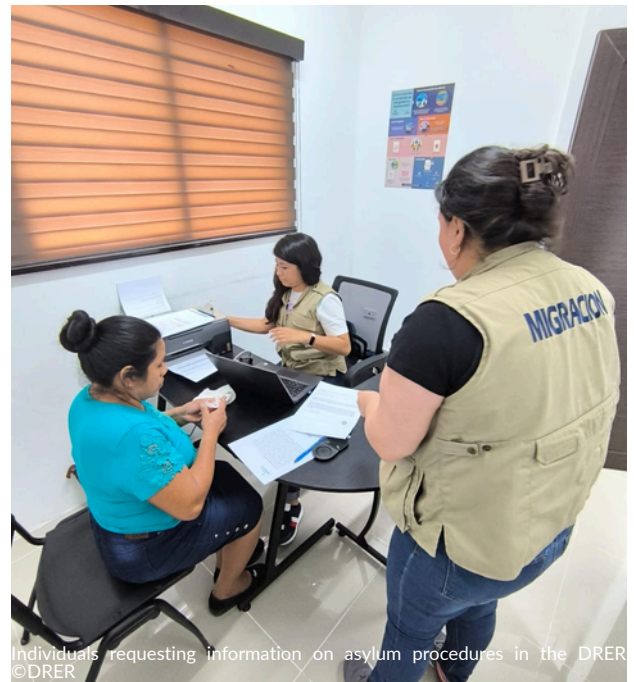
PROTECTION



STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL ASYLUM SYSTEM

UNHCR continues to support the Government of Guatemala in strengthening its national asylum system, ensuring access to protection for individuals fleeing violence, persecution, and conflict.

- Through improved outreach, decentralized registration missions, and enhanced case management, more individuals are seeking protection. As of September 2025, Guatemala hosts over **7,990 asylum-seekers and refugees**.
- From January to September 2025, **1,132 new applications** were recorded, maintaining the same upward trend as last year, which saw record-high figures.
- The Guatemalan Migration Institute (IGM), the Department for the Recognition of Refugee Status (DRER), and the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE) continue to play a central role in ensuring fair and efficient procedures.



Individuals requesting information on asylum procedures in the DRER ©DRER

- UNHCR provides targeted technical assistance to DRER, including regular coordination meetings to assess operational needs and strengthen capacity in international protection and refugee law.
- UNHCR supports DRER-led Mobile Service Days, enabling individuals to formalize applications, complete eligibility interviews, and receive final decisions closer to their communities.
- Through the MIRPS platform, UNHCR facilitates experience-sharing among CONAREs, promoting best practices and regional coherence in asylum systems.
- UNHCR focuses on identifying returnees with international protection needs and refers them to available services that can address their specific situations.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



UNHCR supported the National Institute of Statistics in launching an infographic on internal displacement in Guatemala. The data revealed **573,000 individuals displaced by violence** and **685,000 displaced by weather-related disasters**, strengthening evidence-based advocacy and response planning.



UNHCR contributed legal and technical expertise to the draft **statelessness regulation** led by the Guatemalan Migration Institute, in coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior. UNHCR continues to serve as an advisory body in the ongoing analysis and discussion process.



UNHCR, as co-lead of the Protection Sector in Guatemala, secured approval from the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) for **the 2025–2027 Protection Strategy of the Humanitarian Country Team**. UNHCR initiated coordination efforts to socialize the strategy and begin implementation planning.

RESOLVE

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR guides its efforts toward sustainable and effective integration for refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and returnees by ensuring access to legal documentation, essential services, and protection mechanisms. These efforts are reinforced through strategic collaboration with donors, development banks, international cooperation agencies, private sector partners, and civil society organizations, all committed to fostering inclusive development and advancing durable solutions.



Sustainability: UNHCR builds individual capacities for self-reliance, enabling access to employment and entrepreneurship as a pathway to long-term integration and economic autonomy.



Strategic Partnership: UNHCR collaborates with public institutions, private sector actors, development banks, and cooperation agencies to expand inclusive opportunities and drive systemic change.



Integrated Support: UNHCR delivers a tailored package of training, referrals, financing, and technical guidance to strengthen economic resilience and reduce vulnerability.



Innovation for Integration: UNHCR adapts financial tools and training to local realities and pilots scalable models with partners to address economic challenges and meet market demands.



Market-Responsive Training: UNHCR aligns vocational programs with labor market needs, ensuring skills match productive sectors and improve access to sustainable employment.



Inclusive Policy Advocacy: UNHCR engages national and local authorities to promote access to documentation, work permits, and social protection, laying the legal foundation for durable solutions and supporting internally displaced populations and statelessness.



Community Resilience: UNHCR supports local initiatives that strengthen host and displaced communities through infrastructure, cooperatives, and shared services that foster social cohesion.



Prevention and Response: UNHCR integrates violence against women and girls prevention and survivor support, ensuring safe economic pathways through gender-sensitive programming.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

UNHCR established a Livelihoods Referral Mechanism to expand access to economic inclusion opportunities. From July to September, it referred **73 individuals** to specialized training in barista skills, labor integration, and financial inclusion, strengthening their pathways to sustainable livelihoods.



With UNHCR's support, the Ministry of Labor issued work permits to **571 refugees and asylum-seekers**. This achievement enhances legal access to formal employment and reinforces long-term integration efforts across Guatemala.

INITIATIVES 

UNHCR has strengthened collaboration with national institutions to protect and integrate displaced populations through improved response mechanisms, human rights advocacy, and violence prevention initiatives.

Partnerships with the Ombudsperson’s Office (PDH) and Secretariat for Prevention of Violence, Sexual Exploitation, and Human Trafficking SVET have expanded outreach via mobile units, [PDH mobiles](#), and [UNIVETs](#), serving remote and marginalized areas. These mobile initiatives, strongly supported by the Vice President of Guatemala, are now central to the national response to sexual violence and human trafficking.

UNHCR continues to build strong local partnerships, welcoming commitments from [15 municipalities](#) and [4 departmental governorates](#) through the [Cities of Solidarity initiative](#). This collaborative model brings together national and local governments to protect refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced populations, and returnees. With support from UNHCR and civil society, local authorities lead efforts to create safe, inclusive spaces where displaced individuals can access essential services, rebuild their lives, and contribute meaningfully to their communities.



UNIVET, a mobile unit initiative in Izabal led by SVET, supported by UNHCR. ©UNHCR /Victor S.



PDH speedboat, a mobile initiative in Izabal by the Ombudsperson’s Office, ©UNHCR Victor S.



Children in Esquipulas take part in the Sports for Peace program, led by the Municipality under the Cities of Solidarity initiative © Municipality of Esquipulas

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



In partnership with the Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation, and Human Trafficking (SVET), UNHCR strengthened national protection and prevention systems by deploying nine UNIVETS mobile units. As of August 2025, these units have reached [117,216 individuals](#) across urban and rural areas nationwide, providing vital information and guidance to prevent gender-based violence.

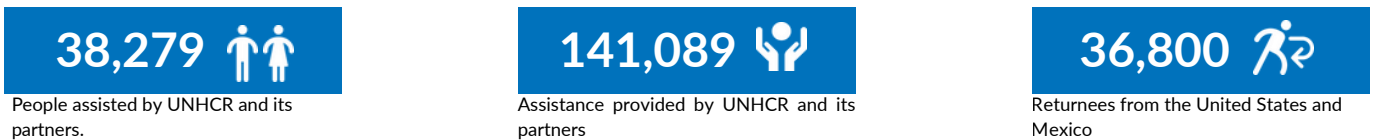
ON THE FIELD

UNHCR maintains a presence on the field through key actors operating in strategic areas, ensuring a continued response to the needs of individuals under its mandate. UNHCR continues to prioritize protection and durable solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and stateless persons.

To align operations with emerging priorities and enhance efficiency, UNHCR has undertaken a strategic realignment of its presence and programming:

- UNHCR maintains its presence in two strategic border areas, Peten and Esquipulas.
- UNHCR merged its Guatemala offices to streamline operations, reduce overhead, and sustain support in areas without a direct presence.
- A strategic review enabled the phaseout of lower-impact initiatives. It redirected resources toward high-priority protection activities, including legal aid, support for asylum seekers, and targeted assistance for women, girls, and survivors of violence.
- These adjustments reinforce national ownership and strengthen coordination with local institutions to sustain long-term impact.

These adjustments reinforce national ownership and strengthen coordination with local institutions, including the leadership of departmental governorates, municipalities, civil society organizations, and other key actors focused on human mobility. Through the Local Protection Committees (Mesas de Protección Local), UNHCR promotes inclusive dialogue and joint action to address protection risks and ensure access to services for displaced populations. This approach supports long-term impact and enhances the national response to vulnerable people.



Source: UNHCR Response Monitoring, Guatemala Data. Figures as of September 2025 from the National Institute of Migration.



Youth gathering held under the Cities of Solidarity initiative in Peten ©UNHCR



Workshop with municipal school teachers focused on protection, access, and rights of refugee and asylum-seeking children within the education system. ©UNHCR

UNHCR is grateful for the contributions of donor countries that contribute in the Americas and to global programmes with flexible funding:



Also, we thank the contributions of our global private donors in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, and Spain.

*As of 31 May 2025