UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Mexico
Operational Update
January to September 2025

Figures at a glance

+45,500
PEOPLE
sought asylum

+12,600
PEOPLE
were supported to obtain documentation

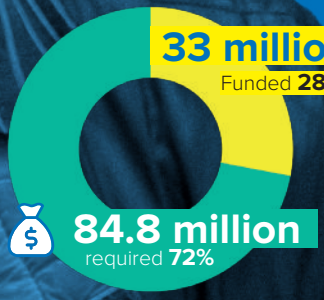
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS 2025

Top nationalities

*Data available as of 30 June 2025 on Refugee Data Finder: https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download

FUNDING (AS OF 30 SEPTEMBER 2025)

USD 117.9 million
requested for Mexico in 2025



PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED PROTECTION SERVICES

49,000
refugees and asylum-seekers

+1,300
internally displaced people

+2,100
others with international protection needs

PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED LEGAL ASSISTANCE

+14,000
refugees and asylum-seekers

+50
internally displaced people

+2,000
others with international protection needs

PEOPLE WHO BENEFITED FROM SPECIALIZED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PROGRAMMES

+260
refugees and asylum-seekers

+390
others with international protection needs

CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS WHO RECEIVED CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

+1,650
refugees and asylum-seekers

+1,650
others with international protection needs

PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFIS)

+38,100
refugees and asylum-seekers

+23,800
others with international protection needs

PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED SHELTER AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE

+6,000
refugees and asylum-seekers

+3,500
others with international protection needs

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VULNERABLE PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED CASH ASSISTANCE

+5,400
refugees and asylum-seekers

PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

+870
refugees and asylum-seekers

+390
others with international protection needs

PEOPLE WHO BENEFITED FROM EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

+370
refugees and asylum-seekers

PEOPLE WHO BENEFITED FROM LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION INTERVENTIONS

+4,500
people

PEOPLE WHO WERE SUPPORTED BY UNHCR TO ACQUIRE NATIONALITY, PERMANENT RESIDENCY OR ACCESS NATURALIZATION PROCEDURES

+190
refugees and asylum-seekers

PEOPLE WHO USED UNHCR-SUPPORTED FEEDBACK AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS TO VOICE THEIR NEEDS, CONCERNS OR FEEDBACK

20
refugees and asylum-seekers

PEOPLE WHO WERE CONSULTED THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS

+200
internally displaced people

Operational Context

In 2025, people fleeing violence, persecution, and threats continue to find refuge in Mexico. While irregular entries from the southern border have decreased, the scale and complexity of protection needs have grown significantly, and the number of asylum claims remains consistent with 2024 figures showcasing that people in need of international protection are still forced to leave to find safety. Until June, more than 45,500 people have sought asylum in the country. Cubans accounted for almost 50 per cent of the national total, with more than 22,000 asylum claims, followed by Venezuelans with more than 9,600 claims and Haitians with more than 5,000. Another observed change is an increase of people arriving in Mexico with the intention of rebuilding their lives—often after facing threats, exploitation, or serious violence in their countries of origin and during their journeys. In 2025, more than 60 per cent of people interviewed by UNHCR cited violence, threats and intimidation as the main reason for leaving their countries of origin.

UNHCR, in close collaboration with federal and local authorities, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector, has an extensive response across key areas—legal protection, shelter, documentation, psychosocial support, and livelihoods—to ensure forcibly displaced people can access safety and begin restoring their dignity in their new home. UNHCR's work is anchored in the belief that people forced to flee deserve more than survival—they deserve the opportunity to recover, integrate, and thrive.

To sustain its response, UNHCR requires flexible funding. As protection needs grow and more people seek long-term solutions in Mexico, increased financial support is essential to ensure continuity in life-saving assistance and to expand pathways for integration.

2025 Mid-Year Protection Monitoring Report

UNHCR's 2025 **Protection Monitoring** data, collected in collaboration with civil society partners, paints a shifting and increasingly complex picture of displacement in Mexico. Between January and August, UNHCR interviewed more than 3,000 people across 12 cities across the country, from south to north, including Tapachula, Mexico City, Reynosa and Ciudad Juárez. The findings indicate a significant increase in protection needs.

The proportion of people citing violence, threats, or intimidation as their primary reason for fleeing rose from 50 per cent in 2024 to more than 60 per cent in 2025.

Moreover, 80 per cent of respondents stated they would face serious risks if they were to return to their home countries. These figures suggest that a growing majority of new arrivals are in urgent need of international protection.

For the first time, Mexico emerged as the preferred country of destination: some 70 per cent of respondents named Mexico as their destination, compared to just 30 per cent choosing the U.S. This marks a pivotal shift in regional human mobility patterns and underscores the importance of continued investment in Mexico's asylum system.

The survey also highlighted serious protection risks within Mexico. Among those surveyed in northern border areas, 60 per cent reported experiencing a crime while in the country. The most common incidents included kidnapping (22 per cent), theft (21 per cent), and extortion (10 per cent). Furthermore, 70 per cent of respondents reported having no migration or asylum-related documentation at the time of the interview, further heightening their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, and severely limiting their access to essential public services.

Despite these risks, displaced people forcibly continue to show extraordinary resilience and determination. UNHCR remains committed to supporting the Government of Mexico in strengthening protection systems and ensuring that those forced to flee are met not only with safety—but with opportunity and hope for the future.

Protection

Access to international protection is the cornerstone of UNHCR's response in Mexico. This requires strong legal guidance and services. Between January and August 2025, nearly 49,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, and 2,100 other displaced people benefited from protection services, including legal counseling, referral mechanisms, and case management. For thousands, this support marked their first step toward safety and legal recognition. Additionally, more than 1,300 internally displaced people also received support.

More than 14,000 people received direct legal assistance, enabling them to access the asylum system, understand their rights, and begin pathways toward regular status. UNHCR also supported more than 12,600 people to obtain civil or legal documentation—such as birth certificates, identity documents, or residency papers—unlocking access to public education, healthcare, and formal employment. These seemingly small documents have life-changing impacts, particularly for families with school-aged children or survivors of gender-based violence.

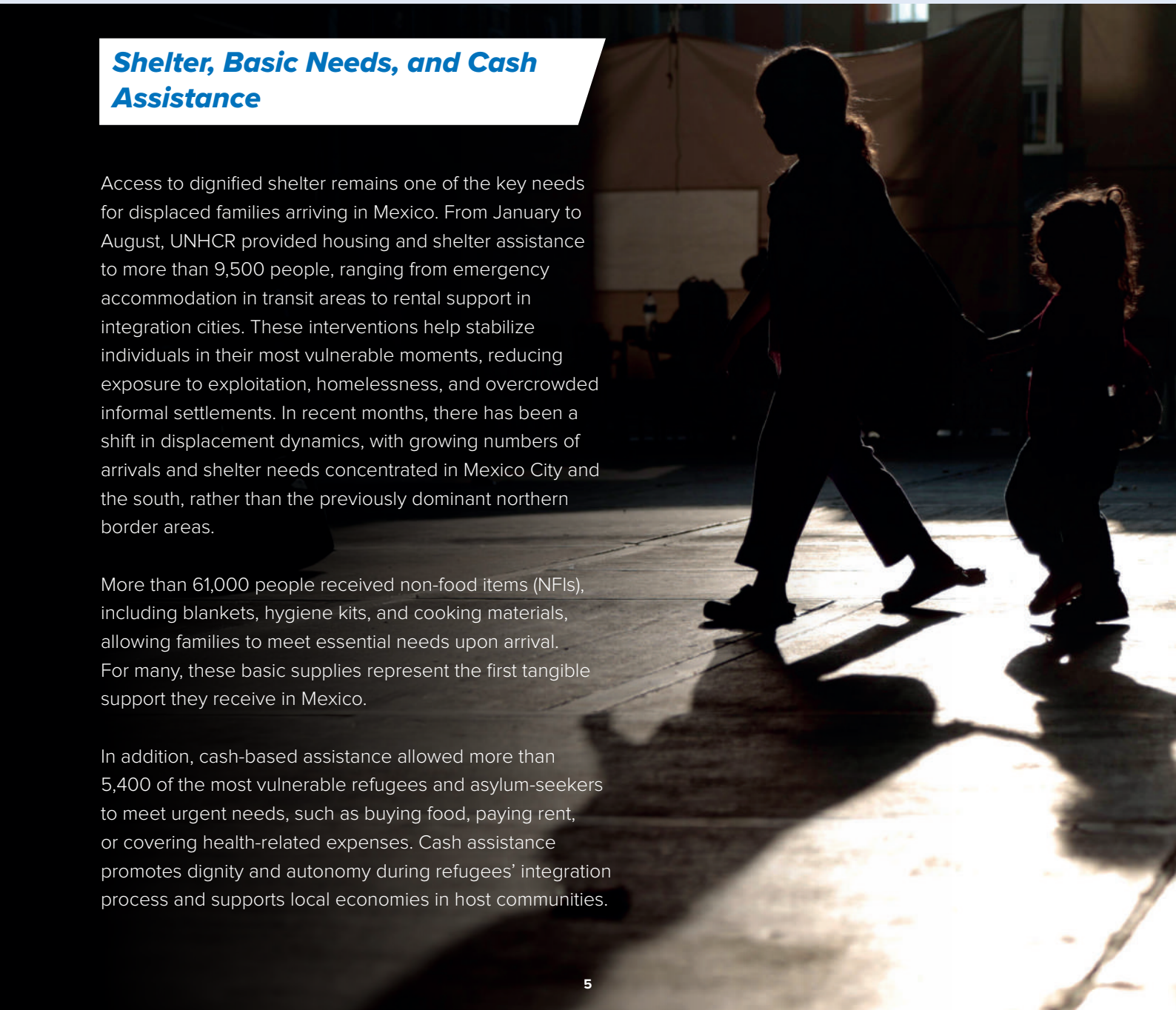
Specialized services reached survivors of violence and those at heightened risk. In the first six months of the year, more than 650 people—most of them women and girls—accessed gender-based violence (GBV) programming, receiving psychosocial support, legal aid, and referrals to shelters. Simultaneously, more than

3,300 children and caregivers received child protection support, including best interest assessments, case follow-up, and access to safe spaces. These interventions not only address immediate safety concerns—they lay the groundwork for long-term healing and recovery among the youngest.

As displacement continues to rise and protection risks deepen, the need for legal assistance, documentation, and specialized services is steadily increasing—underscoring the urgent need to scale up UNHCR's protection response across Mexico

Despite growing needs, community engagement efforts remain a priority. UNHCR conducted participatory assessments with more than 200 internally displaced people (IDPs) to better understand protection risks and tailor programming accordingly. Thus far, some 20 people have submitted complaints or feedback through the formal feedback mechanisms. This highlights the ongoing need and UNHCR's compromise to continue building trust and ensure safe, accessible channels for communication and accountability.

Shelter, Basic Needs, and Cash Assistance



Access to dignified shelter remains one of the key needs for displaced families arriving in Mexico. From January to August, UNHCR provided housing and shelter assistance to more than 9,500 people, ranging from emergency accommodation in transit areas to rental support in integration cities. These interventions help stabilize individuals in their most vulnerable moments, reducing exposure to exploitation, homelessness, and overcrowded informal settlements. In recent months, there has been a shift in displacement dynamics, with growing numbers of arrivals and shelter needs concentrated in Mexico City and the south, rather than the previously dominant northern border areas.

More than 61,000 people received non-food items (NFIs), including blankets, hygiene kits, and cooking materials, allowing families to meet essential needs upon arrival. For many, these basic supplies represent the first tangible support they receive in Mexico.

In addition, cash-based assistance allowed more than 5,400 of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to meet urgent needs, such as buying food, paying rent, or covering health-related expenses. Cash assistance promotes dignity and autonomy during refugees' integration process and supports local economies in host communities.

IDP Highlights

In addition to ongoing efforts to strengthen protection for IDPs across Mexico, two key developments marked significant progress this year. The Congress of Oaxaca approved in 2025 the **Law to Prevent, Address, and Redress Internal Forced Displacement in the State**, supported by UNHCR and other UN Agencies. The law, presented on 9 December 2024, recognizes forced displacement as a crime and obligates the government to respond, prevent and repair victims. UNHCR provided technical support and participated in public consultations with displaced people and host communities. Oaxaca is now the fifth Mexican state with such legislation.

The Chihuahua State Commission on Internal Displacement developed a **Protocol of Emergent Response for Internally Displaced People (IDPs)** with UNHCR's technical assistance. The Protocol was launched in June 2025 and provides directives for State ministries and municipalities to ensure protection of IDPs and to deploy early interventions to prevent forced displacement, even in cases of preemptive displacement. The Protocol also includes a standardized needs assessment tool created with guidance from the 2023 Profiling of Internal Displacement in Chihuahua, and technical support from UNHCR.

Health and Psychosocial Support

Displacement takes a deep psychological toll. Many arrive in Mexico after enduring violence, loss, or separation from loved ones. UNHCR supported more than 1,200 people through mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS), offering counseling and emotional support, often in coordination with shelters, partners or medical providers. These services are crucial for long-term integration and well-being, and are particularly impactful for survivors of trauma and violence. Nonetheless, the demand for psychosocial support continues to grow, increasingly surpassing the resources and capacities currently available.

Education

Education is both a right and a foundation for long-term integration. UNHCR worked with local authorities and schools to help nearly 400 refugee and asylum-seeking children benefit from education programming. Support included enrollment guidance, provision of school supplies, and referrals to psychosocial care for children affected by trauma. These efforts are key to ensure permanence in the education system, helping displaced children remain enrolled and engaged over time. As more displaced families seek stability, the need for inclusive and sustained educational support continues to grow, especially for children facing barriers to enrollment and to continue their studies.

Livelihoods and Local Integration

UNHCR's livelihoods and economic inclusion programming helped more than 4,500 people begin building self-reliance through skills training, entrepreneurship, and job placement support. For people rebuilding their lives after displacement, economic inclusion is a critical enabler of independence, dignity, and community integration. UNHCR also supported nearly 200 people to obtain the Mexican nationality, permanent residency, or access to naturalization procedures—an essential step toward long-term stability and access to full rights in Mexico.

Until September 2025, more than 3,400 refugees chose to relocate as part of Mexico's Local Integration Program (PIL), seeking safety and stability in new communities across the country. This brings the total number of participants to more than 52,000 since the program's launch in 2016, reflecting its growing relevance as a durable solution. In addition to those newly relocated, UNHCR also supported more than 4,200 refugees already present in their cities of integration, marking a total of more than 117,000 people supported since 2021.

With more displaced people pursuing long-term stability in Mexico, demand for economic inclusion, legal pathways, and relocation support continues to rise, highlighting the importance of scaling up integration efforts.

Stories From the Field

From Venezuela to Engineering in Mexico: The Journey of a DAFI Student

When Guillermo arrived in Mexico from Venezuela, this young refugee dreamed of studying engineering. He was torn between mechanical and electrical engineering—until he discovered a degree programme at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) that combined the best of both fields. Through hard work and perseverance, he secured his place at the university.

His university journey was marked by major challenges. In his second semester, the pandemic began, and virtual classes made it difficult to learn in the labs that are essential to the program. *"Seeing them through a screen is never the same as being able to interact and experiment firsthand with the equipment,"* he notes. Still, once back in the classroom, he was able to fully take advantage of these spaces, which became his favorite part of university life.

Thanks to his academic performance, Guillermo landed his first internship at a multinational packaging company, where he applied computer-aided design and manufacturing processes. Later, he joined a company specializing in water control for dams and hydroelectric plants. There, his passion for mechanical design and fluid mechanics deepened, eventually leading him to become the lead designer of one of the largest Howell-Bunger-type relief valves ever manufactured in Mexico—destined for the La Libertad dam in Monterrey.

> *"I set my mind to getting in, taking the entrance exam just like every other applicant. I can say it wasn't easy—it took me more than one try"*

Reflecting on his academic journey in Mexico, he shares: *"Every step I took—from growing up with a father who was an electrician by trade and a mechanic by passion, to all the classes I attended, the sleepless nights, the school projects, the hours spent in the library, and my drive to succeed—has been part of what I've achieved today. The other part has been the unwavering support of my family, the tremendous help from the DAFI Scholarship Programme, and the guidance of my professors."*

Now a graduate, Guillermo hopes to continue contributing to the development of Mexico's automotive and infrastructure sectors. The DAFI Programme has enabled refugee youth like him to access higher education and is one of the five pillars of the strategy to ensure that 15 per cent of refugee youth are enrolled in tertiary education institutions by 2023—an initiative known as the 15/30 Goal.

Financial Information

You can help us continue building a world of possibilities for thousands of displaced people and their host communities in Mexico. **Donate now.**

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 with unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR operations in Mexico.

A special thank you to all our donors in 2025 (as of September 2025)

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