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The UN Refugee Agency

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Advancing together towards integration

2022 Highlights UNHCR Mexico

Executive summary

Elba, a refugee from Venezuela, has thrived in Puebla with her family business.

Operational Context

In 2022, forced displacement continued throughout the hemisphere. The number of new arrivals at the southern border continued to increase, placing **Mexico among the countries with the highest number of asylum applications.** In recent years, the number of those considering Mexico as a country of asylum has grown steadily, as the country's capacity to receive and integrate them has increased. In 2021, the number of asylum claims reached a new record with over 130,000; 2022 represented the second year with the highest number of asylum claims filed, with more than 118,000.

In 2022, Mexico witnessed a **notable increase in the number of Venezuelan, Cuban and Nicaraguan asylum seekers in the country.** Honduras was the country of origin most represented in the asylum-seeking population, followed by Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela.

Border restrictions and Title 42 removals from the U.S. continued in 2022, with few humanitarian exceptions. The eight-month reinstatement of the **Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP)** allowed U.S. authorities to **return more than 7,000 individuals to Mexico's northern border** to await their hearing dates. The announced changes to the **applicability of Title 42 to Venezuelans** resulted in overcrowded shelters and the filing of more than 6,000 asylum applications in Mexico in the last three months of

In recent years, refugees found in Mexico the place to establish their new home.

the year (double the number of claims filed between January and October 2022).

The complexity of mixed movements of refugees and migrants, and consequent response policies like the MPP and Title 42, not only increased the risk of refoulement and chain refoulement, but also posed additional pressure on the already overstretched processing capacity of the **Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR)**, given the accelerated increase in asylum applications and the absence of alternatives for legal stay. Although COMAR **quadrupled its processing capacity since 2018**, with an average recognition rate of 63%, its resources remain limited and additional government efforts are needed to increase its operational capacity.

In 2022, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration implemented a pilot programme to support more than 1,000 Haitian nationals with relocation and integration assistance.

Mexico is also experiencing an increase in internal displacement, generated by a rise in violence perpetrated by criminal and drug-trafficking groups and land disputes in at least seven states. The Population and Housing Census 2020 shows that 251,513 people changed municipality or state in the last five years due to violence or insecurity. According to the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, **over 379,000 people were displaced in Mexico due to incidents of mass violence from 2006 to 2021.**

Key results

UNHCR provides technical and financial support to COMAR to ensure effective access to international protection and a comprehensive response, and advocates for the accurate interpretation of refugee status determination standards to ensure the quality of interviews, legal assessments, and integrity of the asylum system. However, the increasing number of asylum applications and the absence of regular stay alternatives meant that COMAR managed to process only 58% of the claims filed in 2022 (in 2021 this figure stood at 44%).

In Mexico, shelters play a central role in the humanitarian response for people who have been forced to flee, and in the delivery of protection services such as accommodation, access to information, assistance to specific needs, legal orientation and advice, medical support and psychosocial assistance. In 2022, more than 15,000 people accessed comprehensive assistance in these spaces.

Through the Humanitarian Assistance Program, the most vulnerable people received monetary transfers to cover their most basic needs while they undergo the asylum process.

UNHCR prioritized the participation of refugees and host communities, integrating their opinions in the operation's planning exercises.

It also made efforts -in coordination with UNICEF- to strengthen the inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system and, with its partners, focused on providing alternative care for them. Through capacity building and coordination with partners, it reduced the risk of gender-based violence in shelters. It also created a plan to relocate people with disabilities to the center of the country to promote their social and economic inclusion.

Through the Local Integration Program, 12,796 refugees received relocation and integration assistance, the highest number to date. Since 2016, over 29,000 people have benefited. UNHCR has cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and over 500 private companies willing to hire refugees.

Nearly 200 people submitted their request for naturalisation following the resumption of the process suspended in the pandemic. Under the Global DAFI Program, 52 university refugee students received support in 2022, while 14 of them graduated. UNHCR supported another 121 students under its tertiary education program.

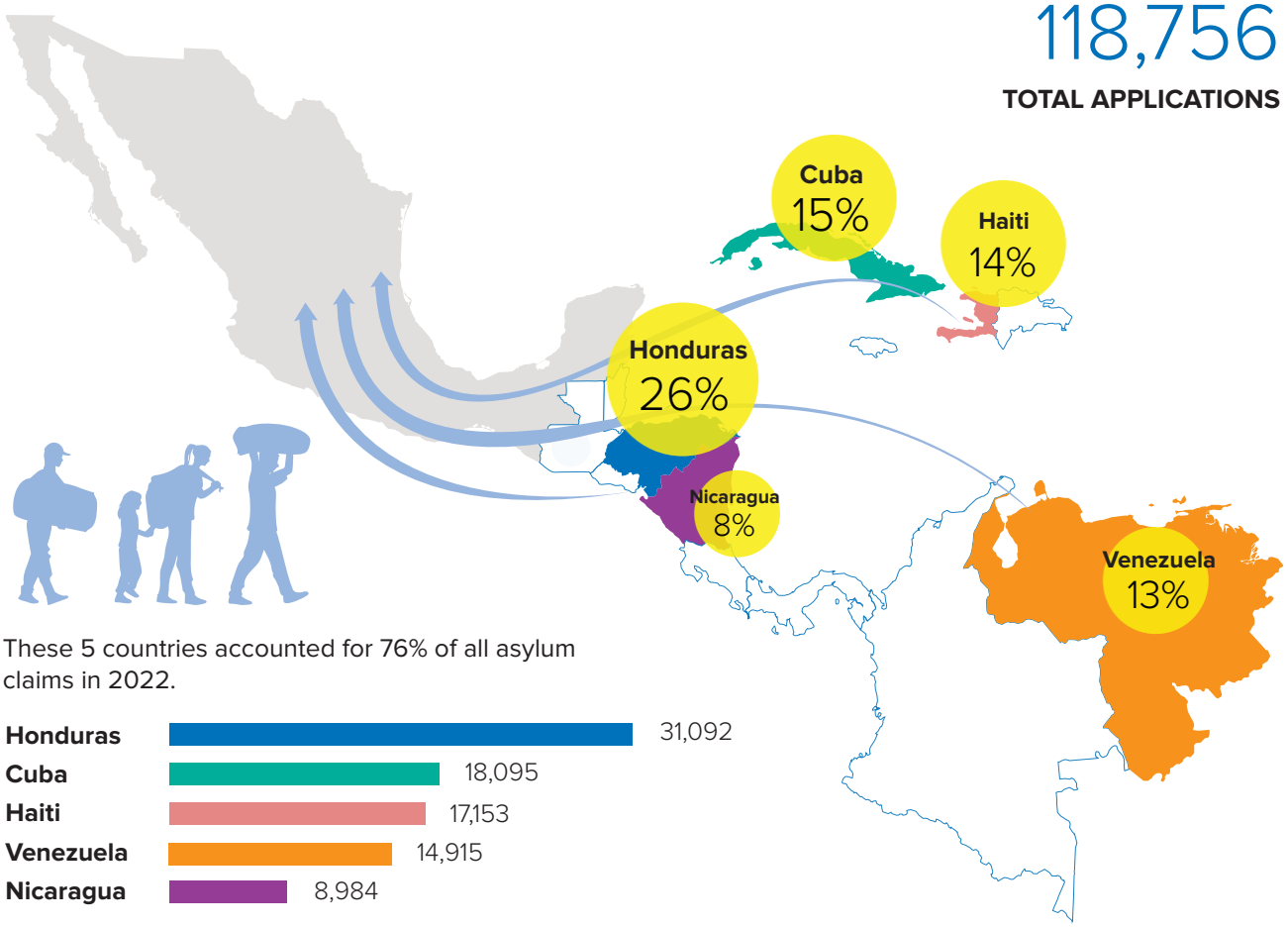
In 2022, UNHCR coordinated comments by UN Agencies on the draft laws on IDPs proposed by the states of Michoacán and Estado de México, and expanded its internal displacement presence in Chihuahua, Michoacán and Sinaloa. In addition, though the Interagency Working Group on IDPs, UNHCR and ICR, coordinated the production of a Manual on Internal Displacement for the Supreme Court of Justice.

UNHCR Mexico at a glance

NEW ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN 2022

118,756

TOTAL APPLICATIONS



These 5 countries accounted for 76% of all asylum claims in 2022.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

	WOMEN	29%		**GIRLS**	10%
	MEN	50%		**BOYS**	11%

UNHCR support to COMAR

187
ADDITIONAL STAFF
provided to COMAR to increase its registration and processing capacity.

64,082
INDIVIDUAL RESOLUTIONS
by COMAR.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT
through the Asylum Quality Initiative (QAI) to improve registration and simplified and differentiated procedures.

UNHCR REGISTRATION AND ASSISTANCE

47,422
INDIVIDUALS
in
2473
FAMILIES

registered with UNHCR across the country and provided with assistance - (45% women, 55% men). **In terms of age cohorts,** 12% were children aged 0-5; 19% were aged 5 - 17; 68% were aged 18 - 59; and 1% were above 60; 2% revealed to be LGBTIQ+; 5% were persons with disabilities.

+34,000
INQUIRIES
were responded to through the UNHCR Helpdesk.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

200,966
ASYLUM SEEKERS
received legal advice by lawyers and paralegals for the first time (both as legal orientation and legal assistance).

8,041
ASYLUM SEEKERS
were represented by UNHCR's network of jurists for the first time (42% women, 57% men, 1% did not specify their gender).

106
LAWYERS

58
PARALEGALS

43
PUBLIC DEFENDERS

within UNHCR's network provided legal aid across 31 different cities

COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATION

762
PEOPLE
women, men, children, elderly, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and members of host communities joined UNHCR participatory assessments.

818
REPORTS
filed through the Community Based Complaints Mechanism established to share feedback and register complaints.

CHILD PROTECTION

1,152
CHILDREN
supported with specialized case management.

6,047
CHILDREN BENEFITED
from psychosocial, recreational, and educational activities, in 20 child-friendly safe spaces.

66
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN
supported with alternative care.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION, MITIGATION, AND RESPONSE

1,227
SURVIVORS
of gender-based violence received UNHCR counselling and services through UNHCR specialised partners.

1,925
STAFF FROM GOVERNMENTAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS
trained on prevention and response to gender-based violence and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

172
UNHCR STAFF, PARTNERS AND AUTHORITIES
trained in the identification of persons with specific needs.

4,551
INDIVIDUALS
benefited from sectoral cash grants for protection needs such as health, emergency housing, and security, among others.

SHELTERS

132 **SHELTERS** in **48** **CITIES**
supported with infrastructure improvements, personnel, distribution of Non-Food Items, and capacity building.

UNHCR worked closely with UNICEF, IOM, and ICRC to coordinate its shelter interventions and mitigate the risk of duplication.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

16,952 **NEW ASYLUM-SEEKERS** received cash grants as part of the Humanitarian Assistance Programme (49% women, 51% men - 3.6% revealed to be LGBTIQ+). **In terms of the age cohort,** 17% were aged 0-5, 24% were aged 5-17, 58% were aged 18-59, and 2% were above 60.

LOCAL INTEGRATION

12,796
REFUGEES RELOCATED
as a part of UNHCR's Local Integration Programme.

43,589
REFUGEES
benefitted from *in-situ* integration support.

+500
PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANIES
are employing refugees

181
REFUGEES
applied for naturalisation

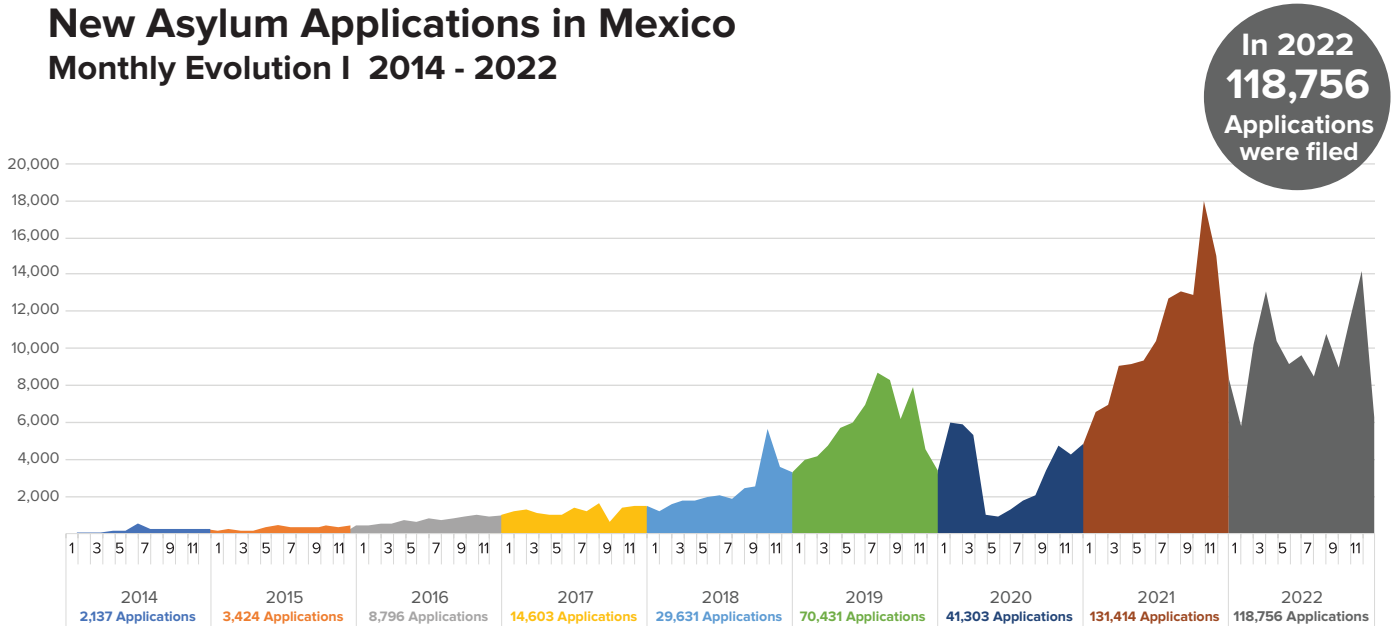
EDUCATION

3,021
ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEE CHILDREN
supported with school enrolment.

213
REFUGEE STUDENTS
received UNHCR scholarships to study at university.

171
ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES
receiving support on recognition of their diplomas, access to accelerated education programmes and vocational training to facilitate their job placement opportunities.

New Asylum Applications in Mexico
Monthly Evolution I 2014 - 2022



Source: COMAR 2014-18, SIRE 2019-2021

Looking ahead into 2023 with the Global Refugee Forum

The second Global Refugee Forum will take place in Geneva in December 2023. The forum was born in 2019 as a platform to be held every four years to advance the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. The second forum will focus on the practical implementation of existing and new pledges with a view to “make a real and transformational improvements for refugees and host communities”. In Mexico, preparations for the Forum have begun through the creation of a roadmap that foresees a follow-up on the 2019 pledges and the identification of new, practical, and measurable pledges focused on access to asylum, socioeconomic and labor inclusion, and improved reception conditions.

UNHCR is grateful for the generous support provided by donors globally, as well as those who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funds to Mexico Operation and its programs in 2022

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