UNHCR ACNUR
La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

April - June 2023
Operational Update 18

HONDURAS

Key Figures

+247,000

people have been internally displaced in Honduras as a result of violence between 2004 and 2018.

583,581

Honduran nationals have been returned from 2015 until 30 June 2023, according to data from CONMIGHO.

135,493

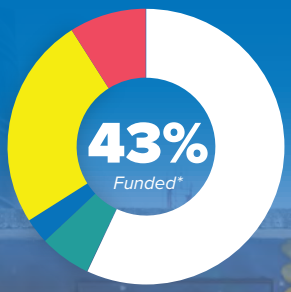
persons of different nationalities entered Honduras irregularly in the first six months of 2023, according to the National Migration Institute (INM).

Our Response

41,000

mainly internally displaced persons, but also asylum-seekers, returnees, mixed movements, and host community members were served by UNHCR and its partners by June 2023, with services such as shelter, cash and voucher assistance, community protection, case management and risk mitigation. In addition, UNHCR Honduras content has reached 305,000 people through social media.

Funding



*As of 27 June 2023

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

UNHCR is appealing for USD 30.1 million for its 2023 programme, of which USD12.9 million (43%) is already funded. USD17.2 million is still needed to continue supporting people forcibly displaced, at risk of displacement, asylum-seekers, refugees, and persons in mixed movements.

Highlights

25th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles:

Honduras hosted the Global Dialogue to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement with the visit and participation of the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights for IDPs, Paula Gaviria. Her visit was led by UNHCR and the Resident Coordinator, in coordination with the Government of Honduras. During the global event, the Human Rights Secretary highlighted the symbolic value of the Special Rapporteur's visit as a recognition of the country's progress on the national response to internal displacement, particularly considering the recent approval of the historic IDP protection law.

Following the global event, the Special Rapporteur participated in a national dialogue where high level representatives of twelve key public institutions discussed the challenges and opportunities to implement the law, highlighting their commitment to strengthening coordination mechanisms, preparing to include response measures in the upcoming strategic planning processes to allocate resources for 2024, and establishing clear pathways to improve civil society and IDP participation. The national dialogue, which also included the participation of civil society organizations, community-based groups, academia, donors and international organizations, was the first action with which the process of implementing the law was officially launched; it therefore marks a step towards continuing to promote intersectoral discussions and the complementarity of different actors to ensure a comprehensive response.

IDAHOT:

On 17 May, to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, UNHCR and partners promoted events in different parts of the country, raising awareness to this important topic.

World Refugee Day:

On 20 June, UNHCR and several partners carried out different activities throughout Honduras to celebrate World Refugee Day, an international day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees and displaced people around the globe.

Paula Gaviria, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Natalie Roque Minister of the Human Rights Secretariat, Guido Eguigure, Vice Minister of the Human Rights Secretariat during the event to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement.

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Context

In the second quarter of 2023, Honduras has experienced an upsurge in violence, the main cause of forced displacement in the country, along with other relevant events that generate fear and collective uncertainty. This despite being under a State of Exception since December 2022. The Decree has been renewed four times and extended to 15 departments to respond to the increase in cases of crimes, including extortion, which impacts different sectors of society and is one of the main triggers of forced displacement.

Between January 1 and June 26, 2023 the Violence Observatory of the Autonomous University of Honduras (OV-UNAH) reports that

26 massacres

have been registered in the national territory with a balance of

145 people murdered

The increase in violence has been reflected mainly in serious acts of violations that have swept the country, including:

i) The death of 46 women deprived of their liberty on 20 June at the Women's Centre for Social Adaptation (CEFAS, after a riot involving members of gangs MS-13 and Barrio 18. More than seven riots happened in detention facilities in 2023, with prisons being controlled by gangs and groups dedicated to drug trafficking.

ii) A massacre on 24 June leaving 13 people dead in the municipality of Choloma, amongst them the president of the Gildan textile factory union, Xiomara Coca, along with her son. This happened two days after the union had announced its disagreement regarding the closure of the plant, where more than 2,700 people work.

iii) Assassination of three people from the community of Guapinol, northeast Honduras, which led in June to the forced displacement of at least 45 people from the area due to an increase in persecution, homicides, and threats from leaders and their families. They have been fighting to defend their land, impacted by the concession of mining and timber exploration rights by private initiative.

As a result, the Government announced a series of new security measures. Firstly, aiming to gradually regain control of detention facilities, actions such as disarmament will be taken, in addition to other procedures targeting criminal actives orchestrated and controlled from detention centres that are exercised in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, the Government will implement the "Candado Valle de Sula" operation. This includes multiple operations, raids, captures and checkpoints during the first 24 hours, and a curfew from 9 pm to 4 am starting from 25 June for the municipality of Choloma and San Pedro Sula, two of the biggest ones in the Country.

In relation to the security measures being implemented by Honduras, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR suggested formulating a public security policy respectful of the human rights approach and with a gender perspective and differentiated approaches. This was a result of 91 preliminary observations following IACHR on-site visit to the country to verify the human rights situation. In a press conference, they expressed their concern over the lack of justification demonstrating the suitability, necessity, and proportionality of the extension of the state of emergency as a measure to combat crime, extortion, and related crimes.

Apart from violence and crime, the country is facing rising food insecurity and 20% of children are stunted for this reason. The Civil Protection Honduran National Agency (COPECO), declared on 5 June a yellow alert for drought in 85 municipalities of the Dry Corridor. This is a consequence of the "El Nio" phenomenon, which will leave scarce rains in the national territory and in different periods, accentuating the drought with greater force between 1 June and 10 July.

Another important forced displacement trigger is the forced recruitment of children and youth by gang members. In this sense, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights published a report shedding light on the evermore violent work required by organized crime to be performed by children. In Honduras, gangs take advantage of the unimputability of children 12-years-old and younger to carry on forced tasks.

Adding on to the risk of forced recruitment, 300,000 children and youth between the ages of three and 17 that had left the educational system between 2020 and 2022 did not return to classes in 2023, according to the Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ). Furthermore, they also face the risk of sexual violence. The humanitarian organization World Vision reported that sexual violence against children and youth is on the rise in Honduras.

RESPONSE

Protection

IDP LAW | The Human Rights Secretariat, with the support of UNHCR, developed a process to identify milestones and needs for the implementation of the law, as well as a projection of the minimum budget required. This input has been used in multi-sectoral spaces and high-level events, such as the National Dialogue to Commemorate the 25th anniversary of the guiding principles.

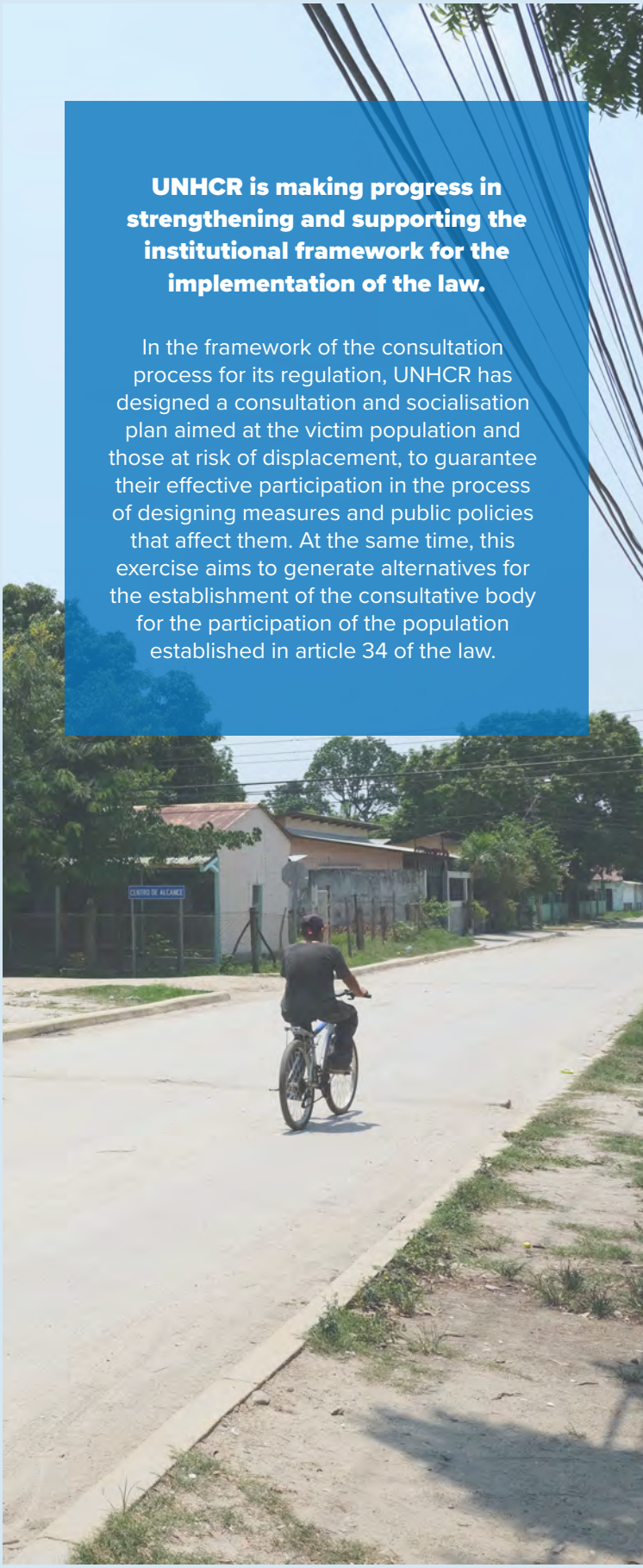
In line with Article 79 of the IDP Law, on 31 May 2023 the first Public Assembly was held to elect the civil society organisations that will make up the Plenary of the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons (CIPPDEF). In this election, civil society organisations elected World Vision and the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations of Honduras (ASONOG) as their representatives.

MIRPS | In the second quarter of 2023, the MIRPS' Secretary of Strategic Planning carried out a training session for officials of the planning units of 112 government institutions. The MIRPS Technical Team was invited to present the State's commitments established within the framework of the MIRPS, the problems it addresses, and the needs of the population internally displaced by violence, returnees and refugees and asylum seekers. With this participation, the first steps are taken to ensure that the needs of this population are included in the institutional annual operational plans of 2024.

CLUSTER | COPECO informed that approximately 209,872 persons in the dry corridor area are going to be affected by the dry season, mainly on their food and nutrition needs. The Agency is developing a tool to be applied in each municipality to understand the type of response that is needed. COPECO and WFP informed that 51,188 families are going to be served during the first phase for an undefined period and UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of an IDP criteria in the tool for the identification of persons forced to flee in the country.

UNHCR is making progress in strengthening and supporting the institutional framework for the implementation of the law.

In the framework of the consultation process for its regulation, UNHCR has designed a consultation and socialisation plan aimed at the victim population and those at risk of displacement, to guarantee their effective participation in the process of designing measures and public policies that affect them. At the same time, this exercise aims to generate alternatives for the establishment of the consultative body for the participation of the population established in article 34 of the law.



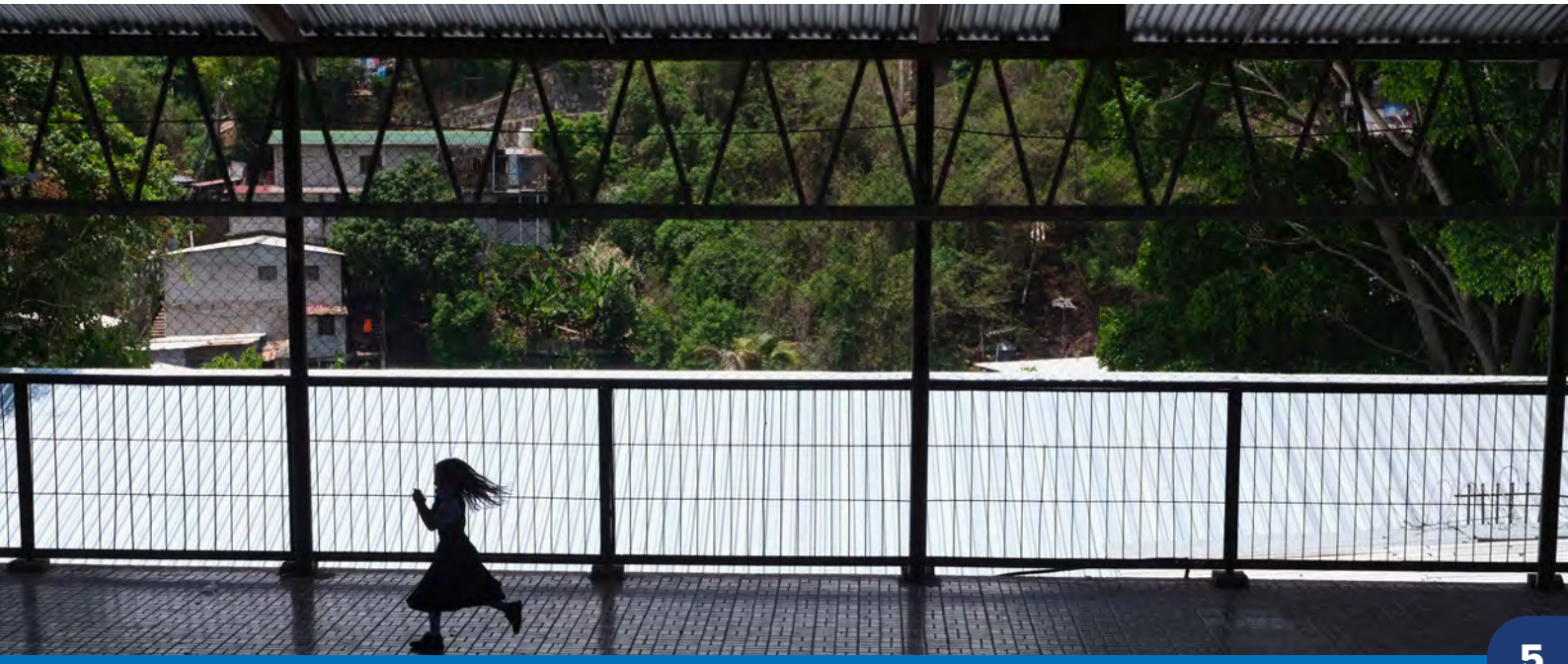
INTER AGENCY | The Special Advisor on Development to UNHCR, Herve de Villeroche, visited Honduras from 17 to 20 May. During the visit, he met with the IADB, IMF, UNDP, UN Resident Coordinator, the Ministries of Social Development and Finance and the National Institute of Statistics. Those meetings served to discuss opportunities for joint work, the support that multilateral banks can offer the Government for a comprehensive response to the problem of internal displacement, learn about Honduras' protection programs and what synergies could be created with multilateral banks, so that the efforts being made achieve a greater impact. In addition, he visited a community at-high risk of forced displacement due to violence called Rosalinda, to acquire knowledge about the context, the magnitude and impact of violence as well as the needs in similarly affected communities.

On another note, Honduras was selected as one of six case studies worldwide for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC evaluation of the humanitarian response to forced displacement. This evaluation aims to examine and provide recommendations on how the needs of IDP populations can be better met and durable solutions promoted. The following areas of analysis were addressed: **(i)** coordination and planning; **(ii)** leadership and accountability; and, **(iii)** foundations for durable solutions. The assessment took place from 12 June to 4 July, led by Erin Mooney, under the coordination of UNHCR and IOM.

Dialogues were held with members of the humanitarian network, the protection cluster, national and local government, civil society organisations and the private sector. In addition, more than 23 displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement and returnees were consulted, addressing displacement due to violence, land use conflicts and disasters, with representation of children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons and Garifuna communities.

In the preliminary findings presented to the Resident Coordinator, the UNCT and the humanitarian network, Erin Mooney highlighted the challenges in generating information to show the magnitude of displacement in Honduras related to **(i)** the invisibility of displaced people due to protection risks, **(ii)** the narrative of migration for economic reasons that hides the magnitude of displacement due to violence and **(iii)** invisible borders that hinder humanitarian access to communities. Based on the findings, it proposed recognising the humanitarian crisis in Honduras and strengthening capacities to adapt the humanitarian architecture and response plans to the main shocks that generate needs, as well as inter-sectoral coordination to mitigate the risks of displacement by violence and disasters.

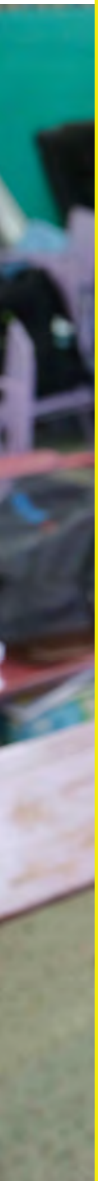
On the other hand, in relation to environmental disasters and climate change, UNHCR was convened by the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) to establish the basis for the design of the adaptive social protection policy that aims to address the medium- and long-term response to populations affected by this context. The UNHCR representative suggested that the policy discussion should consider both the population affected by disasters and those affected by less visible impacts related to the impacts of climate change associated with deficiencies in land use planning and regulatory gaps related to **(i)** land use conflicts, **(ii)** deficient regulation and clarification of individual and collective property, and **(iii)** violence by illegal actors associated with the resolution of territorial conflicts. In sum, disasters and the impact of climate change generate displacements that need to be addressed under criteria that allow, with limited resources, to address territories and populations in a gradual and prioritised manner, giving special relevance to land use planning in the adaptive policy to address climate change impacts.



COMMUNITY- BASED PROTECTION | Considering that territorial disputes by organized crime and associated violence are part of the main forced displacement triggers in Honduras, UNHCR develops community-based protection programmes to **(i)** recover public spaces disabled by these triggers, **(ii)** prevent forced recruitment, **(iii)** foster a safe protection environment and sense of belonging of internally displaced people and at-risk of displacement with their communities and **(iv)** identify protection cases amongst affected population.

Communities can be the source of prevention and mitigation of risks associated with the impact of violence when strengthened, providing a safe protective environment. UNHCR works with Honduran authorities to refer internal displacement cases for attention and follow-up, as well as provides technical support to build protection routes in high-risk areas prone to forced displacement. In addition, UNHCR works to strengthen organisational structures with programs focused on art, culture, sports, entrepreneurship, as well as health and education, and protection of goods at risk of abandonment.

Given the disproportionate impact against youth, on May 9, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Instituto Nacional de la Juventud (INJUVE) to strengthen joint efforts to mitigate the risks of forced displacement and for the implementation of the Law on Internal Displacement, emphasizing the needs and risk faced by the country's youth.

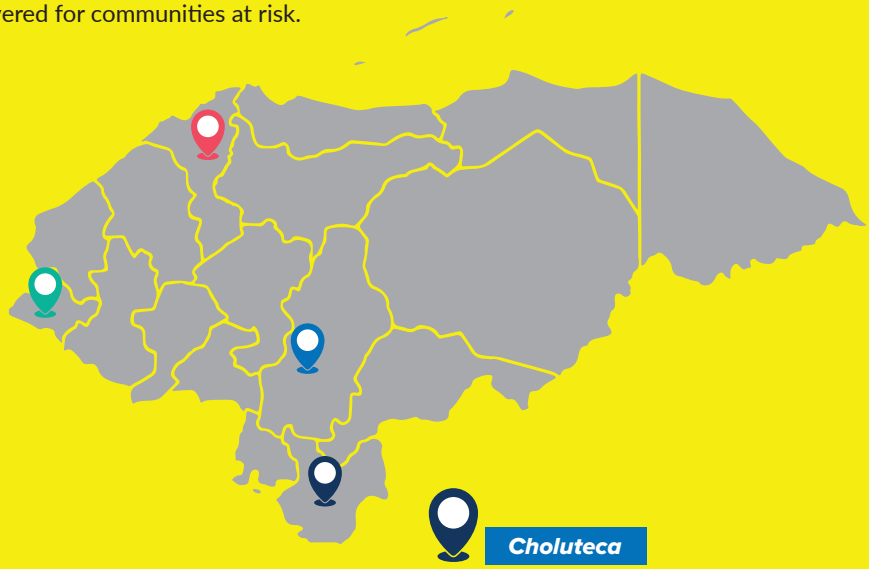


San Pedro Sula

Eight protection plans were delivered to communities highly affected by forced displacement triggers, serving as routes to prevent it and to respond to cases when they happen. In addition, one urban planning analysis was delivered aiming at the recovery of public spaces, giving back to the community spaces for socialisation and prevention of forced recruitment of youth. Furthermore, in order to ensure early preparedness for climate-related disasters, eight early warning plans were delivered for communities at risk.

Tegucigalpa

UNHCR carried out weekly sessions of its Sport for Protection activities with the National Commissioner of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (CONDEPOR) and Save the Children. These activities are aimed to prevent forced displacement triggers such as forced recruitment and to strengthen the protection environment of communities highly affected by generalised violence. More than 400 members of several communities around the capital participated in these weekly events.



Ocotepeque

UNHCR and the local Secretariat of Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen coordination ties. As a result, the community mobile library and digital literacy strategies will be implemented jointly to prevent digital protection risks in children, adolescents, and young people, such as forced recruitment and smuggling. The mobile library will be developed in rural communities and urban schools in border areas.

Choluteca

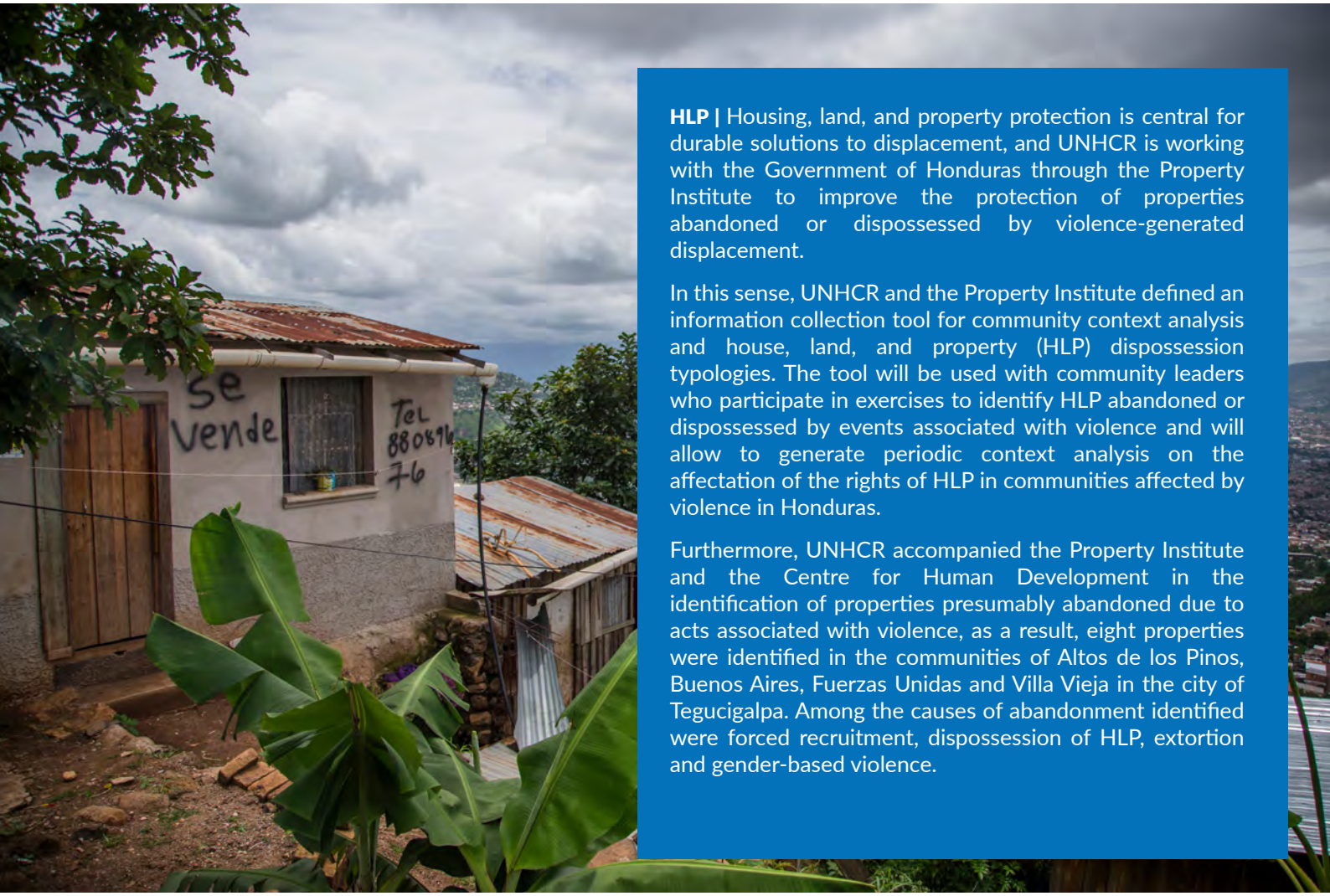
On 24 June UNHCR joined the inauguration of the RAJUMCH Protection and Training Centre. This infrastructure is going to be used in the training processes of the Choluteca youth networks, population at risk of displacement, internally displaced persons and if necessary, as a temporary shelter for persons in mixed movements. UNHCR will provide follow-up to measure the impact with the persons with and for whom UNHCR works.

LIVELIHOODS | People forcibly displaced or at-risk of displacement face challenges in recovering livelihoods and meet basic needs. To provide durable solutions after the displacement and consequent loss of livelihoods, as well as mitigate forced displacement risks in communities under vulnerable situations, UNHCR develops different services to IDPs.

UNHCR distributed cash-based assistance to support people in their enrolment in adult education training, which will facilitate adults who earlier abandoned education due to difficult life situation to obtain school level diplomas. The participants of the program received this assistance to cover enrolment, tuition fees and their travel expenses. The academic year is nine months, during which the students will cover a program in an accelerated manner. Upon successful completion of the program, the graduates will receive an official diploma that will facilitate their job opportunities.

In Tegucigalpa, UNHCR started entrepreneurship training to people affected by internal displacement with the Business Development Centre (CDE), as part of efforts to improve livelihoods for those affected by forced displacement. The participants are from at-risk communities in the Central District, including La Esperanza, El Guanabano, San Miguel, and Corralitos.

In San Pedro Sula, UNHCR and its partner Business Development Centre (CDE) finalized the first round of a series of trainings for persons in entrepreneurship and micro and small business start-up. The most successful participants will further compete for seed capital support to kick-start their business idea. Furthermore, with the support of UNHCR, its partner Fe y Alegria and the Municipality of San Pedro Sula, the La Central Youth Community Centre (CCJ) started its second class of youth and adults that will receive technical education on Computer Science/Information Technology, Electricity, and Refrigeration for the next five months.



HLP | Housing, land, and property protection is central for durable solutions to displacement, and UNHCR is working with the Government of Honduras through the Property Institute to improve the protection of properties abandoned or dispossessed by violence-generated displacement.

In this sense, UNHCR and the Property Institute defined an information collection tool for community context analysis and house, land, and property (HLP) dispossession typologies. The tool will be used with community leaders who participate in exercises to identify HLP abandoned or dispossessed by events associated with violence and will allow to generate periodic context analysis on the affectation of the rights of HLP in communities affected by violence in Honduras.

Furthermore, UNHCR accompanied the Property Institute and the Centre for Human Development in the identification of properties presumably abandoned due to acts associated with violence, as a result, eight properties were identified in the communities of Altos de los Pinos, Buenos Aires, Fuerzas Unidas and Villa Vieja in the city of Tegucigalpa. Among the causes of abandonment identified were forced recruitment, dispossession of HLP, extortion and gender-based violence.

MIXED MOVEMENTS

Context

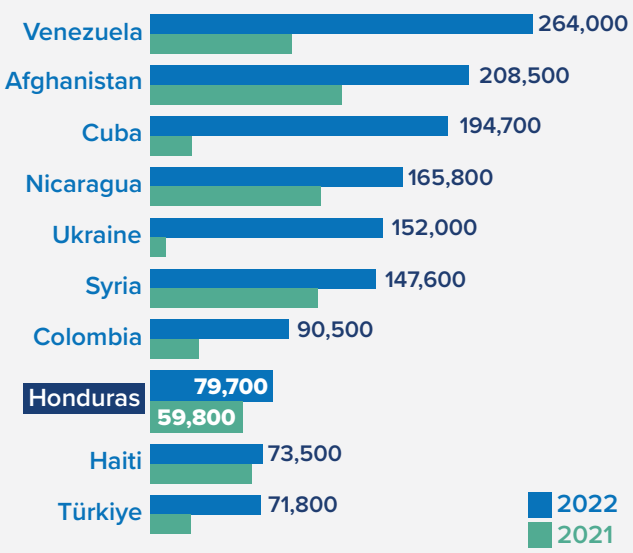
Between 1 April and 30 June, in total 74,961 persons in mixed movements have entered Honduras irregularly according to official INM statistics, an increase of almost 20% in comparison with the first quarter of 2023. Of these, 62% were men, 22% women, 10% boys and 6% girls. Main nationalities were Venezuela (47%), Cuba (9%), Ecuador (9%), Haiti (7%). According to INM, in the first six months of the year, more than 135,400 persons had entered the country irregularly, which is two and a half times more than during the same period in 222, demonstrating the strong need to continue to improve reception conditions.

According to UNHCR's monitoring, the population trend of people in mixed movements crossing through Ocotepeque to exit towards Guatemala is at around 10,000 persons on average per week, which is significantly higher than during the same period in 222. Venezuela is the country of origin of most people, followed by Ecuador and Haiti. Since the opening of the first INM-led and UNHCR-supported Comprehensive Assistance Centre for Persons in Mixed Movements (CAMI in Danl in mid-January this year, 19,781 refugees and migrants were hosted in the centre. 47% were men, 27% women, 14% boys and 12% girls. Venezuela (63%, Ecuador (13% and Haiti (11% were the most represented nationalities. The set-up of the Centre was supported by Refugee Housing Units (RHUs donated by UNHCR to the Government of Honduras, which now serve as a temporary shelter to vulnerable persons in mixed movements. Among the services provided are information, food, medical and psychological assistance, WASH facilities. The shelter operates almost constantly at its maximum capacity of 150 persons per night causing people to stay in public spaces in Danl.

On another note, on 6 June, the Government published in its official gazette the extension of the amnesty on the fee for irregular entries to the country. This amnesty exempts all nationalities until 1 January 2024 from the fine that had a value of around 259 dollars. UNHCR together with INM's Human Rights Unit and other actors had strongly advocated for the extension of the amnesty, which has significantly improved the protection environment of persons on the move in Honduras. In addition, due to the large number of persons in mixed movements, on 21 June, INM announced that they will now also attend persons on Saturdays and Sundays, from 7am to 5pm, in their delegations in Trojes, Danlí and Choluteca.

ASYLUM - SEEKERS

UNHCR's Global Trends 222 publication indicates that Honduras ranks eight in the list of countries with the highest number of new asylum applications in the world. UNHCR Honduras produced infographics to highlight the data. The number of applications increased from 59,8in 221 to 79,7in 222. At the same time, according to INM Honduras, 71 asylum applications were presented up to June 2023, 39 in the last quarter alone. Of the 71, 39% are from Venezuela, 27% from Nicaragua, 15% from Cuba, 6% from El Salvador, 4% from Colombia, 4% from Ecuador, and the remaining from Peru, Guatemala, and Brazil. This is the first time in Honduras that the number of applications by Venezuelans exceeds those from Nicaraguans. There are currently 125 asylum-seekers and 178 refugees residing in Honduras.



RESPONSE

Protection

CLUSTER | People in mixed movements and returnees face extenuating journeys for being forcibly displaced. While transiting Honduras, many are in need of shelter, food, psychological support, amongst others. In the Machuca area (2 kms away from the Agua Caliente crossing with Guatemala) the Local Humanitarian Response Group for the Western Border led by UNHCR has provided 6,151 medical attentions for people in mixed movements, as well as information on asylum, hydration, psychological assistance, and hygiene kits during the second quarter of 2023. There is also a phone recharge service in this facility, with internet access, and chemical sanitary services so people can connect with their families and meet their basic needs.

In addition, in the southeast border, 287 persons were provided by shelter at Centro de Atención Caritas, and others 506 were served by Hogar Esperanza both shelters supported by UNHCR. Main nationalities served at the shelters were Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, and less persons from Haiti, Senegal, Angola. In addition, the INM's Assistance Centre in Danlí, also supported by UNHCR, assisted more than 19,000 people in mixed movements between until June 2023 with comprehensive services (including medical, psychological, shelter, food, legal counselling, among others), improving reception conditions for those with protection needs.

INFORMATION | People forced to flee are faced with several protection risks in their journey. One of the main difficulties they face are the lack of information or challenges in finding trusted sources. This exposes them to risks of trafficking in persons, abuse, and violence. In addition, many of those requiring international protection do not have information on asylum procedures available or the possibility to request asylum for their cases.

To tackle this, in the second quarter of 2023, UNHCR served over 23,400 people with information on international protection, the asylum system in Honduras and related services available in the country. These services were provided through different mechanisms. At the shelter Casa Migrante and strategic points at the north-western border, an area of the country that receives people in mixed movements on their journey northward, more than 800 people received information to mitigate protection risks. Similarly, UNHCR and its partner World Vision through its Mobile Information Services on the south-eastern border of Honduras provided information to over 22,200 persons in mixed movements entering the country.

MONITORING | To increase visibility on the needs and context faced by people in mixed movements in Honduras, UNHCR published its second High Frequency Report in Spanish and in English. Findings show that: 1) 44% have been informed about the right to seek asylum in Honduras, which emphasises the need to continue capacity development and information materials on asylum. 2 The main needs reported are cash, food, children's items, shelter, legal assistance, and health care. 3 61% of the Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans are aware of the U.S. Parole Programme, but 16% carry a valid passport (one of the eligibility criteria. 4 19% indicated to be at risk of generalized violence if returned to their country of origin, 15% would risk of legal persecution, for 13% their or their family's life or integrity would be at risk, 6% would be at risk of forced recruitment and 4% of suffering extortion.

WASH | UNHCR together with the Departmental Secretariat of Health (SESAL and the major of Santa Fe's municipality inaugurated in May the Maternal and Child-Friendly Space at the border of Agua Caliente. The event was attended by representatives from 12 local institutions including the INM, National Directorate for Children, Adolescent and Family Affairs (DINAF),National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH, border police, International Sanitary Office, Municipal Women's Institute and five humanitarian agencies. The friendly space aims to provide a safe spot primarily for pregnant women and small children in vulnerability who may be part of mixed movements, displaced or returnees where they can receive information on protection, access hygiene facilities and be referred to specialized medical treatment if necessary.

RETURNEES

Context

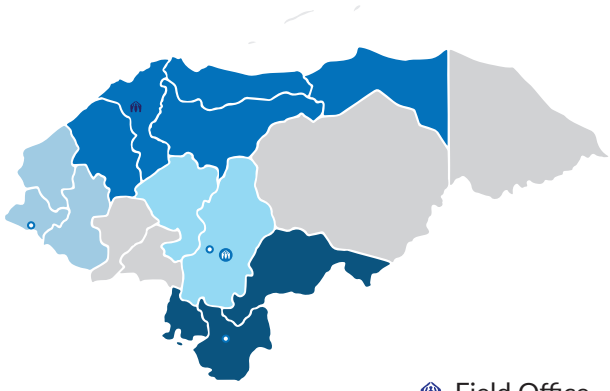
In 2023, a total of 27,719 Hondurans were returned to the three Assistance Centres for Returned Migrants located in the department of Cortés. From April to June, 11,552 people were returned, a 58% decrease in comparison with the same quarter of 2022.

RESPONSE

CASE MANAGEMENT | UNHCR and partners work to strengthen institutional capacities for the care and identification of the returned population with protection needs, and to guarantee that adequate protection alternatives are in place. UNHCR works strategically in the three Centres for Returned Migrants available in Honduras to identify and refer cases of returnees in need of protection, which on average account to 5% of the total returned population. Between April and June 2023, UNHCR attended 101 cases (149 people). The returnees received information on protection alternatives, available services for protection cases, including third country solution's programmes, psycho-social assistance, and internal relocation. In addition, with the support of UNHCR, DINAF is providing some of the children returned with psychosocial support.

JUNTOS | UNHCR jointly with IOM and KIND manages the "Juntos" family reunification programme in Honduras that was established by the United States of America to reunite parents who were separated from their children between 20 January 2017 and 20 January 2021. As a result, in 2022 and 2023, 39 cases (171 persons) were referred from KIND to UNHCR, out of which 12 cases (45 persons: eight women, 17 men, 14 girls and six boys) were eligible.

UNHCR PRESENCE



- Field Office
- Field Unit
- National Office
- FOSAP
- FUCHO
- FUOCO
- FUTEG

Staff:
67 National Staff
40 International Staff
64% women and 43% men

Offices:
01 Country office in Tegucigalpa
01 Field office in San Pedro Sula
03 Field units in Choluteca, Ocotepeque and Tegucigalpa

We thank the contributions of our donors

By 27 June 2023

UNHCR Honduras is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding.

UNHCR Honduras is grateful for the support of private donors.

Australia - Japan - Korea – Spain

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