UNHCR ACNUR
La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

El Salvador
February 2024
Operational Update #2

Ernestina, 81, attends every Thursday to Coffee Afternoons (Coffee afternoons) supported by UNHCR in her community.
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Key figures

Community-based protection

348 individuals assisted through UNHCR's helpline in February, and 773 in 2024.

256 people assisted at the Support Spaces in February, and 638 in 2024.

6,591 people informed through the Support Spaces' mobile units in February, and 13,419 in 2024.

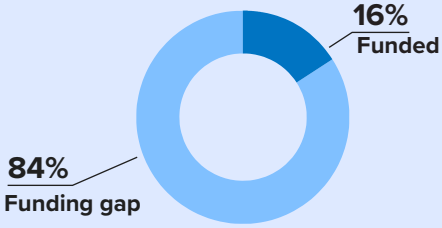
Cash assistance

366 households (1,218 individuals) at heightened risk received cash assistance in February, and **385** households (1,296 individuals) in 2024. This support helps cover basic needs and facilitates livelihoods and education.

Registration

288 people registered with biometrics in February, and in 642 in 2024.

Funding



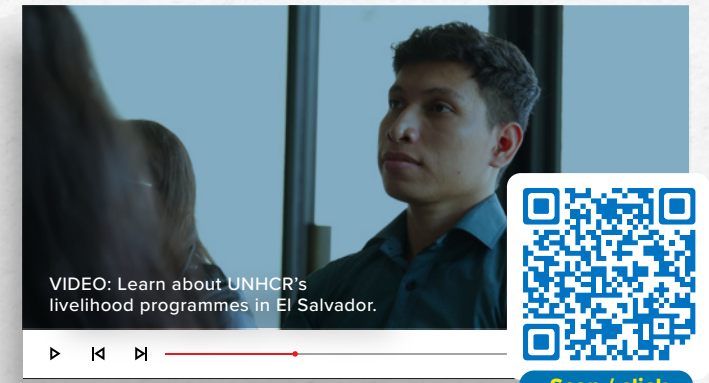
16% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 29 February 2024.

Highlights

- UNHCR, the Ministry of Labour, and World Vision, launched the 2024 My First Job and Súper Pilas livelihoods programmes in an event held at Cuscatlán Park. Under My First Job, eleven internally displaced people, at-risk youth and asylum-seekers participated in a Youth Employment Route, a one-day workshop on soft skills facilitated by employment specialists. The Súper Pilas kick-off activity received 29 participants from San Salvador, who will develop skills related to entrepreneurship, employment, and livelihoods.

- As part of activities to commemorate Older People's month by IVU community (San Salvador), UNHCR provided hygiene kits and food baskets in support to 60 older people at heightened risk. The event gathered the National Council for Integral Attention to Elderly People (CONAIPAM) and older community leaders, who meet weekly at the community centre CUBO during Coffee Afternoons (Tardes de café).

- To strengthen the Ombudsperson's Office (PDDH) protection monitoring capacity, UNHCR donated four laptops and conducted two workshops for 13 staff on the rights of displaced children and prevention of gender-based violence.



Protect

- UNHCR facilitated a workshop for institutions operating at the Centre for the Attention to Migrants (GAMI) to enhance protection and coordination. Thirty-three government officials refreshed their knowledge on the identification of specific needs among returnees and offered suggestions to improve access to services.

GAMI officials participating in a workshop organized by UNHCR to enhace their knowledge on protection and enhance coordination.
© UNHCR / Elizabeth Arroyo

- As part of the collaboration with the Directorate for Human Mobility and Attention to Migrants of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR donated 15 laptops. This contributes to the role of the Directorate as leader of the MIRPS National Technical Team and for the provision of humanitarian assistance to people in need of international protection.

Respond

- UNHCR, FUNDASAL and World Vision shared with the Directorate of Civil Protection 40 communal risk mitigation plans developed in 2023. This collaboration furthers joint efforts to boost local capacities for risk identification, and towards engagement and initiatives by communities.

UNHCR presenting communal mitigation plans to the Directorate of Civil Protection.
© UNHCR / Paulo Lugoboni

Empower

- Twenty-two communities in Santa Ana, San Miguel, San Vicente and Sonsonate reviewed and validated the 2024 work plans presented by UNHCR, COMCAVIS Trans, IRC, Fundasal, Ormusa y World Vision. Community leaders and members prioritized activities to prevent forced displacement and gender-based violence, and to boost community empowerment and social cohesion.

- The Judicial Facilitators of the Supreme Court of Justice of El Salvador and UNHCR conducted two informative sessions in Ahuachapán and Morazán departments with 37 people from several communities and staff from the local courts. The sessions focused on access to rights and services, the work of the Support Spaces “By your Side” and how to identify and refer cases in need of protection.

UNHCR staff accompaning Judicial Facilitators during informative session in San Antonio del Mosco, San Miguel.
© UNHCR

- In Las Margaritas, Soyapango municipality, UNHCR and World Vision met youth commities to kick-off 2024 activities. Multiple community structures will participate in subsequent meetings to develop annual work plans.

Solve

- Twenty participants from San Miguel and nine participants from Santa Ana began their training under the Súper Pilas methodology. The programme aims to support and empower participants to outline life plans through entrepreneurship or return to education. So far in 2024, 74 participants have enrolled in Súper Pilas.

Participants of the Súper Pilas programme in San Miguel
© World Vision

Stories from the field

Starting Conversations: People from Stigmatised Communities Explore Their Realities Through Art

"How many of you have ever been to a museum?" asked Guillermo, the guide before starting the tour at the Museum of Art of El Salvador (MARTE). No one raised a hand in this group of twenty young people, women, men, and older adults from Santa Lucía, a community in the municipality of Mejicanos (San Salvador).

As part of the efforts to foster participation and empowerment in communities historically affected by violence and stigma, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of the Social Cohesion developed this pilot initiative in partnership with MARTE.

A guided tour to the museum allowed participants immerse themselves in a contemplative exercise. They also created collage self-portraits that served as mirrors of their inner being. The selection of images revealed fragments of their stories. Some of them explained their pieces and why they chose certain elements.

"One learns to know oneself beyong what one already knows. We took that time to think about ourselves," noted Joanna, a young participant from Mejicanos: "The activity helped me discover things I didn't know about myself."

"Through creative expression, we can navigate the depths of our emotions, face our struggles, and embark on a journey towards healing," said Sara Boulogne, Director of Education at MARTE Museum. "Art has the ability to transcend barriers, initiate conversations, and foster understanding,"

As Pilar Peña, Community-Based Protection Officer at UNHCR, pointed out, "Cultural activities play a fundamental role in strengthening communities, by allowing their members to perceive themselves as active agents endowed with a critical understanding of their environment. We encourage experiences of this kind due to its transformative and therapeutic capacity, and we offer various forms of expression to those who have gone through traumatic situations."

"Initiatives like these create inclusive spaces where everyone, regardless of their origin or circumstances, can find comfort, inspiration, and relief through art," added Director Boulogne.

At the end of the activity, participants wanted to invite others to visit the museum. They talked about how to replicate the self-portrait collage activity in their community centre. And they dreamed about using artistic expression to break down barriers and promote mental health.

In 2024, **UNHCR appeals for USD 28.6 million** to provide protection, response, empowerment and solutions to refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees with protection needs, internally displaced persons and people at risk of displacement in El Salvador. The best way to support UNHCR's appeal is through unearmarked contributions. Such flexible funding at global level is key in allowing a timely response to the evolving needs wherever required.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support in 2024 of:

Private donors: España con ACNUR

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