Mexico

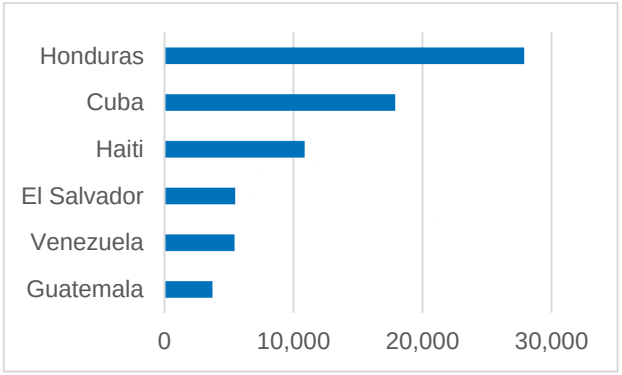
More than **78,900 people** in Mexico applied for asylum in 2024. In 2023, Mexico received a record number of **140,000 asylum claims**, making it one of the countries with the highest number of new asylum claims worldwide.

The Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) has quadrupled its processing capacity since 2018 with the support from UNHCR. **More than three quarters** of all asylum claims in the country are filed in the South of Mexico.

UNHCR's flagship **Local Integration Programme (PIL)** has provided relocation and integration assistance to more than **49,700 recognized refugees** since 2016, who are now working for more than **650 private companies** in Mexico.

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS 2024

TOP NATIONALITIES

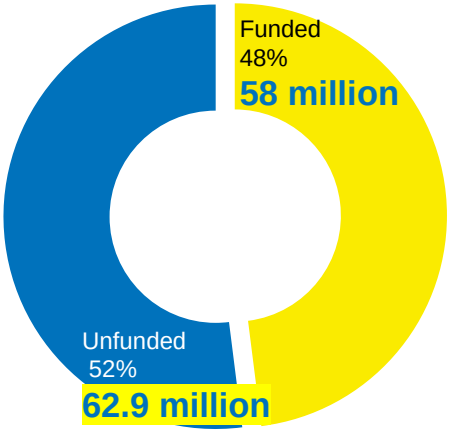


** Data of COMAR available as of 31 December 2024. Due to the migration of data onto a new registration system, these figures may be subject to variation and may not therefore be considered final.*

FUNDING (AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2024)

USD 120.9 million

requested for Mexico in 2024



Operational Context

Mexico has evolved from being a country almost exclusively of origin and transit of many refugees and asylum-seekers, to also being a destination. In 2023 more than **140,000 people** from more than **100 nationalities** sought asylum in Mexico, representing a new record and a **17 per cent increase** compared to the previous year. In 2022 almost **120,000 individual asylum applications** were filed, and more than **130,000 applications** were registered in 2021. These numbers pose additional pressure on the already strained asylum system. Though COMAR has made remarkable progress in increasing its processing capacity over the years with the support from UNHCR, it remains insufficient to meet the current needs, also against the background of a lack of legal stay alternatives to asylum. To accelerate the asylum procedures and to prevent misuse of the asylum system by people wanting to transit Mexico and not having an intention of staying, COMAR has introduced triage procedures. Among the main challenges faced by asylum-seekers and refugees is the **lack of documentation**, such as Humanitarian Visitor Cards (TVRH), increasing vulnerabilities due to the lack of access to essential services and leading some people to feel compelled to continue the journey north.

Mexico is characterized by complex and dynamic mixed movements with an added dimension of internal displacement. The **southern border** of Mexico has seen a consistent increase of arrivals**,** reflected in the high number of people seeking to pre-register with COMAR. As of November 2024, more than **three quarters** of all asylum claims were filed in the south of Mexico (Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz). Hondurans are the main nationality, followed by Cubans and Haitians.

Mexico City has seen a steady increase in asylum applications, representing approximately **20 per cent**[1] of the national total in 2024. Shelters are often overcrowded, which has led to a growing number of people, particularly families with children, sleeping on the streets, exposing them to serious protection risks such as gender-based violence (GBV). This situation has, in some cases, caused tensions with the local population, resulting in expressions of xenophobia and discrimination. In response to the employment opportunities in the capital, partnerships with civil society organizations and private companies have been strengthened to promote the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the city.

In **northern Mexico,** several thousand people on the move live in shelters and informal settlements. Extreme weather conditions, security incidents including kidnappings and extortions, as well as poor health and hygiene services create important protection risks. UNHCR is supporting shelters to improve their reception conditions with the delivery of core relief items, food, cleaning and hygiene products, dormitory and office equipment. In 2024, there has been a significant increase of displaced Mexicans, who now account for **55 per cent** of the occupied spaces.

Mexico experienced an increase in **internal displacement** in recent months, due to increased violence perpetrated by criminal groups and land disputes in at least **11 states.** This year, internal displacement has increased notably in the states of Chiapas and Sinaloa, while continuing in Michoacán and Oaxaca. The national census counted more than 262,400 individuals displaced between 2015 and 2020 because of public insecurity and violence, but this number is widely recognized as an underestimate of the true magnitude of internal displacement in the country. More recently, the National Victimization Survey (ENVIPE) conducted by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimated that over 320,000 households changed homes in 2023 alone as a means of protecting themselves from crime, an increase of over 40 per cent compared to the annual average of preceding years, underscoring the growing impact of crime and insecurity on human mobility within the country.

Working with partners

In Mexico's context of complex mixed movements, UNHCR has sought to strengthen coordinated protection responses, maximising efforts, which is why we work directly with refugees, their communities, and the government. UNHCR also works with other UN Agencies to maximise synergies and avoid duplication. UNHCR co-leads the **UN Inter-agency Group on Human Mobility (GIMH)** together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which brings together ten UN agencies as a cross-cutting area under the UN Cooperation Framework. The GIMH is composed of various working groups on protection, internal displacement, socio-economic inclusion, GBV, shelters, among others. The interagency working groups are coordinated by different UN agencies and include membership of non-UN entities such as national and international NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

With more than **35 funded partners** across the country, UNHCR continues to strengthen its network to enhance coordination in the areas of protection and **durable solutions**. In addition, UNHCR Mexico also holds important cooperation agreements with authorities of federal and local governments, academic institutions, and the private sector. UNHCR's presence is especially strong in the field, where enhanced dialogue and collaboration mechanisms are established with state and municipality government authorities. More than **650 private sector companies** partner with

[1] *This includes claims from asylum-seekers in Mexico City summed with those who have been processed by COMAR in Mexico City in addition to asylum claims from people living in parts of the country where there is no COMAR delegation.*

UNHCR's PIL and actively hire refugees in Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico City, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, Nuevo León, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, and Tabasco.

Key Priorities

Ensuring access to protection and protection responses

UNHCR provides technical support to COMAR through the **Quality Asylum Initiative (QAI)** programme since 2018 working on the implementation of simplified and more efficient processing measures, allowing the efficient reception of asylum claims in contexts of mass influx and mixed movements. This includes consistent work to guarantee the quality of interviews, legal assessments, and the integrity of the asylum system. UNHCR also provides financial support in terms of personnel and material resources to COMAR. The UN Refugee Agency continues to advocate for the correct interpretation of Refugee Status Determination standards.

It is a priority for UNHCR to give people on the move **access to timely and reliable information** to inform their decisions, be it about access to international protection, their rights or local integration perspectives. Refugee outreach volunteers, as well as a wide variety of innovative channels are used to produce and distribute information.

Through a robust network of **49 lawyers**, **50 paralegals**, **43 public defenders**, **19 law firms** and **24 human rights clinics** strategically placed in over **30 cities** across the country, UNHCR provides protection counselling and orientation and representation, guaranteeing **legal assistance** for people in need of international protection. Legal representation of complex cases is taken on by UNHCR's pro-bono allies, who also provide legal opinions on intricate matters both for UNHCR and its NGO partners. The human rights clinics UNHCR works with are located in universities in Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chiapas, Coahuila, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, and Veracruz. In 2024, paralegals and lawyers reached **more than 150,000 people** with information, legal advice, and representation, ensuring efficient access to asylum or immigration procedures in Mexico.

Through **resettlement,** UNHCR finds durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers who face protection challenges in the country. In accordance with the Global Compact for Refugees and thanks to the solidarity of countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States, UNHCR Mexico was able to submit over **150 cases** to Canada and the United States in 2024, representing more than **390 people**. "Emergency" priority cases were also submitted to these countries.

UNHCR Mexico prioritizes the effective participation of refugees and host communities in its programming as part of its approach in **community-based protection**. Yearly participatory assessments and feedback sessions are conducted with people on the move and their hosts to integrate their opinions into the operation's planning exercises. Feedback and complaint mechanisms for refugees and asylum-seekers are in place as a two-way communication channel in accordance with UNHCR's commitment to the Accountability to Affected Populations. In 2024, More than **25,000 queries** were answered through the Helpdesk team in **2024,** the main concern of people calling was the access to the asylum system in Mexico and documentation followed by CBP One appointments. During 2024, UNHCR's information channel **El Jaguar** reached more than **2.8 million Facebook users** (a monthly average of **257,377 users**), registered almost **604,000 visits** to its page (a monthly average of **54,909 visits**) and its publications generated more than **93,000 interactions** (a monthly average of **8,478 interactions**).

Meaningful participation is key to ensure a conducive protection environment. Therefore, UNCHR is strengthening **Refugee-led organizations (RLOs)** through workshops, periodic dialogues, as well as supporting community initiatives through the implementation of Grant Agreements. UNHCR is also accompanying COMAR, and other authorities' institutional efforts to foster the inclusion and participation of refugees in discussions that inform important decision-making processes which directly affect their lives. UNHCR is also supporting the participation of refugees in meaningful events in the international arena. Examples are the **Global Refugee Forum** in which several refugee women participated, and a Venezuelan athlete participating in the **Refugee Olympic Team**.

Reception conditions and access to services with attention to specific needs

In Mexico, **shelters** play a significant role in the humanitarian response and in the delivery of protection services to people forced to flee. They provide not only accommodation, but also access to information, assistance to specific needs, legal orientation and advice, medical support, and psychosocial assistance. In partnership with **26 shelters** and **three shelter networks**, UNHCR ensured that **more than 48,400 persons** accessed comprehensive assistance in 2024, including adequate housing, medical care, and psychosocial support. In close collaboration with ICRC, IOM, and UNICEF, UNHCR supported **133 shelters** in 2024 through interventions including infrastructure improvement, staffing, distribution of Non-Food Items and capacity building. So far, UNHCR implemented the **stoplight protection tool** across **109 of the 300 shelters**. Shelters with a yellow (**46 shelters**) or red (**28 shelters**) are prioritized for support by UNHCR through protection

interventions and development of work plans to reduce risks. In 2024, UNHCR supported the Hospitality Solidarity Shelter Network by implementing and training two generations of full-time volunteers for six consecutive months. Both generations of volunteers assisted **14 shelters** in Mexico, located in Tabasco, Chiapas, Querétaro, Nuevo León, Mexico City, Baja California, Coahuila, and Sonora. Additionally, this year a monthly training program was established for shelters in Mexico. Trainings are conducted virtually and target approximately **128 shelters**. To date, sessions have been held on the following topics: Civil Protection Programs for Shelters, Fundraising for Shelter Management, Internally Displaced Persons, Authorized Donors, Volunteering, Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Child Protection, and Humanitarian Assistance for the LGBTIQ+ population, referral routes to health services and feedback and complaint mechanisms.

UNHCR implements a cash-based **Humanitarian Assistance Programme** through the disbursement of Multi-Purpose Cash Grants allowing asylum-seekers considered as most vulnerable, to be able to cover most of their essential needs during their asylum process. **256 participants** of UNHCR's Local Integration Programme received one-time cash grants of the Ministry of Welfare (BIENESTAR) as part of a collaboration with UNHCR.

UNHCR has advocated for the inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system and has provided technical assistance to **child protection** authorities to ensure timely and comprehensive protection responses. In addition, UNHCR is improving reception conditions and access to asylum for children and advocating for the eradication of child immigration detention. Through its partners, UNHCR seeks to ensure alternative care arrangements for refugee children when family reunification is not possible, and has implemented psychosocial, recreational, and artistic activities for more than **7,800 children and parenting programmes** for over **2,500 parents and caregivers** in **15 child-friendly spaces** in shelters across the country. UNHCR has trained over **1,700 people** on refugee child protection and has provided case management services for over **800 asylum-seeking and refugee children** at heightened risk.

UNHCR seeks to increase community awareness and prevent the risk of **gender-based Violence (GBV)** through capacity-building and coordination with partners. Until November 2024, UNHCR and its specialized partners carried out over **2,300 gender-based violence prevention and response interventions** in key locations such as Ciudad Juárez, Matamoros, Mexicali, Piedras Negras, Tapachula, Tenosique, and Tijuana. Regarding the response, **99 per cent** of survivors expressed satisfaction with the services provided. As part of the GBV risk mitigation strategy, UNHCR partners are evaluated according to IASC standards on protection against **sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).** Additionally, the UN Refugee Agency conducted over **200 activities** to mitigate risks and trained **more than 550 individuals**, including partners, key counterparts, and government officials, on the Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence. It also trained over **270 volunteers and UN personnel** on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, strengthening protection and response networks.

Sustainable solutions for refugees

Thousands of recognized refugees continue to choose to relocate to cities with more formal employment prospects through **UNHCR's Local Integration Programme** known as **PIL**. More than **12,900 people** were relocated in 2024. Once relocated, UNHCR accompanies participants to access employment, long-term accommodation, education, and health services. Since its inception in 2016, more than **49,700 people** have participated and benefited from the program. An additional **110,000 individuals** have been assisted with *in-situ* integration. UNHCR has cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and more than **650 private companies** hiring refugees. Recent studies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean estimate **US$13.4 million** of tax contributions per year were generated by the first **45,000 participants** of the program.

In 2024, **over 590 refugees** have submitted their **naturalization** requests to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **69 per cent** Venezuelans, **14 per cent** Hondurans and **12 per cent** Salvadorans. Over **1,360 refugees** received orientation regarding the process, and **158 refugees**, who were accompanied by UNHCR and its partners, obtained their naturalization certificates.

UNHCR supports young refugees to access higher education in Mexico. Under the **Global DAFI Programme**. More than **46 students** were supported in 2024, with **15 DAFI students** graduating this year. UNHCR and partners supported another **90 students** within its tertiary education programme, including more than **50 per cent** women.

Internal Displacement

UNHCR supports Mexican authorities and civil society in the development of regulatory and public policy frameworks that enable the **protection of IDPs and the achievement of durable solutions**. UNHCR has been working with the Government on **five main axes** since late 2019: (i) technical assistance for the development of regulatory and public policy frameworks; (ii) information management; (iii) capacity building; (iv) strengthening coordination spaces; and (v) promotion of operational responses. UNHCR provides technical assistance to all three branches of government.

In September 2024, the Migration Policy Unit (UPMRIP) and UNHCR presented the Guide for the registration of internally displaced people in Mexico, the first of its kind to assist in the design and implementation of the registration of internally displaced people. In the absence of a specific national law, it provides guidance to local authorities in the design and implementation of registration mechanisms for internally displaced people.

At the request of the Supreme Court of Justice, UNHCR and ICRC coordinated the **Manual on Internal Displacement for Justice Institutions**, a key tool in the resolution of cases before the Federal Judiciary. UNHCR also seeks to strengthen its technical support in the analysis of data. To do this, a report on the population exercise undertaken with **20 actors** in Chihuahua was presented to the State Commission on Internal Forced Displacement. Likewise, UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of internal displacement in statistical exercises, e.g., for the inclusion of a question on internal displacement in the Intercensal population Survey of Mexico.

At the local level, UNHCR continues to support the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Sinaloa to strengthen and harmonize their instruments on internal displacement. In some cases, technical assistance has been provided to address emergencies from a protection perspective. For example, when major internal displacements occurred in Apatzingán, Michoacán, UNHCR and UNICEF supported the local authorities to respond within **48 hours**. UNHCR shared standards for protection in emergencies, a tool oriented to deploy referral pathways for the population, including details on shelter spaces and non-food items. In addition, together with UNICEF, psychosocial first aid strategies were provided, among other actions.

In August 2024, UNHCR participated in **consultations** with indigenous and afro-Mexican communities to develop a proposed law on internal displacement in Oaxaca. Also, the municipality of Apatzingán, in Michoacán, approved Mexico's first regulation for **responding to mass displacement emergencies**, with technical assistance from UNHCR, marking a milestone in strengthening local capacities.

Following a request from the state of Guerrero, UNHCR provided technical tools and standards for the adaptation of its legal framework on internal displacement. UNHCR, ICRC and UNICEF led a series of inter-agency trainings. After the damage Hurricane Otis left in Acapulco and Coyuca, Guerrero in October 2023 and Hurricane John in September 2024, UNHCR delivered core relief items to shelters in the affected municipalities.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. As of 31 December 2024, UNHCR Mexico is **48 per cent funded** having required **US$120.9 million** to respond to the needs of thousands of asylum-seekers, refugees and those internally displaced in Mexico. **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 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 2024** (as of December 2024):

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UNHCR thanks all our individual donors who contribute to our mission every month.

Read more at : UNHCR Mexico Annual Report 2023; UNHCR Mexico Website; Mexico Global Focus; Mexico Data Portal; Global Appeal 2024; Twitter.

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