EL SALVADOR

QUATERLY UPDATE | JANUARY - MARCH 2026

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Our 2026 response in figures

*These figures are regularly updated and reflect cumulative data for 2026.

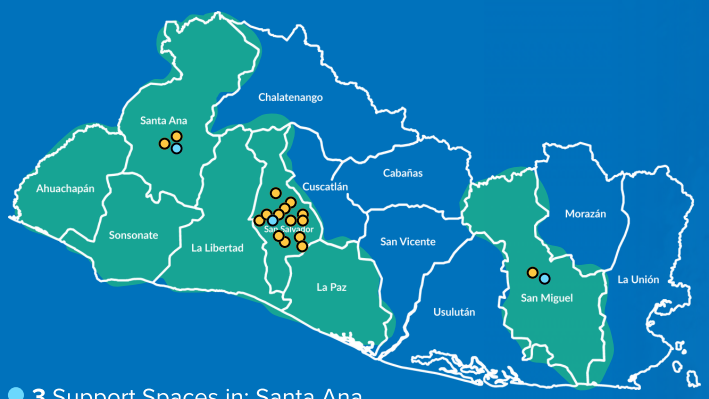
3,032 people
supported through UNHCR's helpline, Support Spaces "By Your Side" and mobile teams.

163 people
supported through legal and documentation orientation.

1,102 people
with enhanced capabilities to promote peaceful coexistence and solutions in their communities.

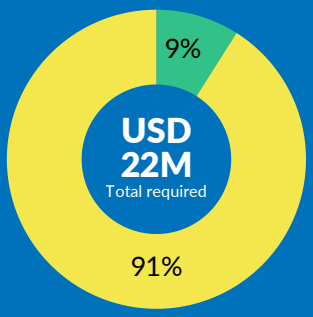
45 civil servants
from key institutions with enhanced knowledge on international protection.

UNHCR's presence in El Salvador



- **3** Support Spaces in: Santa Ana, San Salvador and San Miguel
- **16** prioritized communities and inter-community groups
- **60** communities identified with specific needs

Financial requirements 2026



9% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 30 March 2026.

Lucía, a refugee in El Salvador, dreams of becoming a lawyer to help other people forced to flee.
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HIGHLIGHTS

- UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commemorated 45 years of partnership, recognizing joint efforts to strengthen protection for forcibly displaced and stateless people. The event brought together government authorities, UN agencies, civil society, academia, and international partners, reaffirming a shared commitment to dignity, protection, and solutions. UNHCR highlighted milestones, including enhancing the capacities of the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER), and presented a recognition to the country.
  The ceremony also marked the opening of the art exhibition "Solidarity with People Forced to Flee," developed in partnership with students from the Dr. José Matías Delgado University, which raises awareness about forced displacement and promotes solidarity for people seeking international protection.

- UNHCR joined the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the General Directorate of Civil Protection to launch the Humanitarian Assistance Logistics System (SILAH). Developed with UNHCR's support, SILAH supports ongoing efforts to digitalize the management and distribution of humanitarian assistance, contributing to improved response during emergencies and disasters. The launch event brought together the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, members of the Humanitarian Country Team, and representatives of national institutions.

- As the 2026 MIRPS Pro Tempore Presidency, El Salvador advanced efforts to update its national pledges and strengthen regional coordination. UNHCR supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and member institutions throughout the process, including during the first MIRPS Plenary of the year, where participating countries endorsed regional commitments.

"UNHCR has had the privilege of working side by side with El Salvador during decades, always in fulfilment of its mandate: to protect those forced to flee and support them in rebuilding their lives with dignity."
- Vito Trani, UNHCR Representative in El Salvador

PROTECT

- UNHCR and the Municipality of Santa Ana agreed actions to ensure the continued operation of the "By Your Side" Support Space. The Municipality assumed maintenance of the facility, enabling continuity of services and timely support for people with specific needs.

- In San Salvador Este, UNHCR joined the Municipal Committee for Violence Prevention (CMPV) in the launch of an inter-institutional referral pathway for people in vulnerable situations. Prior to its launch, UNHCR contributed to the update process through participation in technical working tables. This process, supported by the Spanish Red Cross, led to the finalization of the pathway, which now fosters coordinated responses to ensure that people with specific needs receive timely support.

- UNHCR delivered a mobile unit vehicle to the Vice Minister of Diaspora and Human Mobility to enhance access to information and services. Through the Directorate for the Protection of Persons on the Move, this contribution will support emergency assistance, expand outreach, and strengthen reintegration processes for returnees with protection needs.

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RESPOND

- UNHCR and the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA) launched a six month psychosocial support initiative in La Campanera, a community historically affected by violence and displacement. Through group activities and individuals sessions delivered through the Psychosocial Community Support Space, children and families will access mental health and psychosocial support, promoting wellbeing, resilience, and peaceful coexistence.

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Residents of La Campanera community take part in an informative meeting at the community centre to identify needs and plan collective actions.

EMPOWER

- UNHCR and partner FUNDASAL kickstarted the 2026 community strengthening project with representatives from six prioritized communities: La Campanera, Las Margaritas, Distrito Italia, Tutunichapa, Lirios del Norte, and 10 de Octubre. Around 85 community leaders participated in mapping exercises to identify local needs priorities with inputs informing the development of work plans for community-led actions in coordination with local actors.

- Under the "JuegaXLaPaz" project supported by the Barça Foundation, sports promoters, caregivers and participants in several communities developed work plans for actions in 2026, including the organization of inter-community tournaments. The project offers safe spaces for children and adolescents in communities affected by historical violence to learn positive values, coexist peacefully and prevent violence.

- UNHCR and FUNDASAL launched the School on Human Rights and Community Organization, a six-month capacity-building programme engaging 35 participants, including volunteers of the Judicial Facilitators programme of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ), youth networks, and community leaders. The initiative strengthens knowledge about rights, leadership skills, and supports timely referrals for individuals with specific needs.

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Left: Community leaders from Distrito Italia participate in an exercise to identify local needs and priorities. Right: In Los Conacastes, sports promoters and caregivers meet to plan an inter-community tournament aimed at promoting inclusion and community well-being.

SOLVE

- Sixteen asylum-seekers and refugees participated in a socioeconomic characterization exercise led by UNHCR to better understand their needs and priorities. With sessions in San Salvador and Santa Ana, the exercise identified housing conditions, skills, and livelihoods to inform strategies aimed at strengthening coordination and mobilizing support for durable solutions initiatives.

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Asylum-seekers and refugees participate in a socioeconomic characterization exercise led by UNHCR at the Support Space "By Your Side" in San Salvador.

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STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Turning hardship into hope:

A refugee in El Salvador transforms her experience of displacement into resilience and hope

Lucía talks to a UNHCR staff about her story of resilience and desire to give back to the community.
© UNHCR/ Jacqueline Henriquez

Lucía* was only 17 years old when violence forced her to leave her home in her native Honduras. She first sought refuge in another community, where her aunt received her with hope of giving her a safe place to stay, but threats eventually reached her again. That night, she held on to an idea that has always sustained her: even in the hardest moments, it is possible to find a way forward. With that conviction, she made the decision to flee once again to survive, this time to El Salvador.

Thanks to the solidarity and support of the community that received her, she was able to find a stable and fulfilling job. “It was like a light in the middle of adversity,” she says. “That job meant an important change in my life; it helped me regain hope”. With guidance from the Commission for Refugee Status Determination (CODER), she began her asylum process, supported by UNHCR in coordination with national institutions and partners.

Due to several challenges, Lucía had left school years earlier, having completed only sixth grade. When she arrived in El Salvador, she decided to continue her education. With a strong desire to succeed and with support from the Ministry of Education, she managed to complete her basic education and graduate from high school.

*Name changed for protection reasons.

“There were moments when I thought about giving up, but moving forward was the only option. After everything I lived through, I could not give up,” she says.

All the challenges she faced inspired a new dream in her, to study law. “I want to help others. Today my goal is to accompany other people who go through similar situations, so that no one feels alone,” says Lucía, now in her second year of law school. She hopes to someday create a space where women, youth, and refugees who have experienced violence can learn new skills, generate income, and rebuild their lives safely.

Lucía’s story shows that when refugees have access to education, work, and tools to rebuild their lives, they not only transform their own future but also strengthen and contribute to the development of the communities that receives them. Her resilience highlights the relevance of strengthening the asylum system in El Salvador, to ensure that people with protection needs can access an efficient and fair process, and opportunities to rebuild their lives with dignity.

In 2026, UNHCR is appealing for USD 22 million to provide protection, responses, empowerment and solutions to refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons in El Salvador.

UNHCR, the UN Agency for Refugees is thankful for the support in 2026 of:

Australian Aid | En colaboración con Canadá | German humanitarian assistance | Irish Aid | KOICA Korea International Cooperation Agency | Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

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