UNHCR Costa Rica

January – July 2023 Update

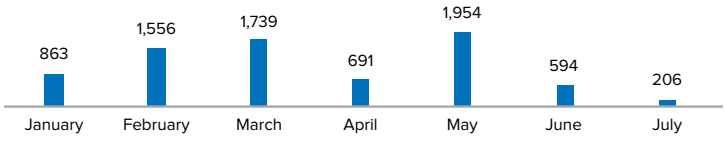
UNHCR donated two new air conditioning and a waiting tent units to Upala's hospital. At the center of the photograph is Vivian Nieme, head of UNHCR's Field Office in Upala, accompanied by medical staff from epidemiological surveillance, respiratory therapy, geriatrics, and the hospital director, Dr. Andrés Ávila (on the left). *UNHCR/Natalia Díaz.*

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Figures at a Glance

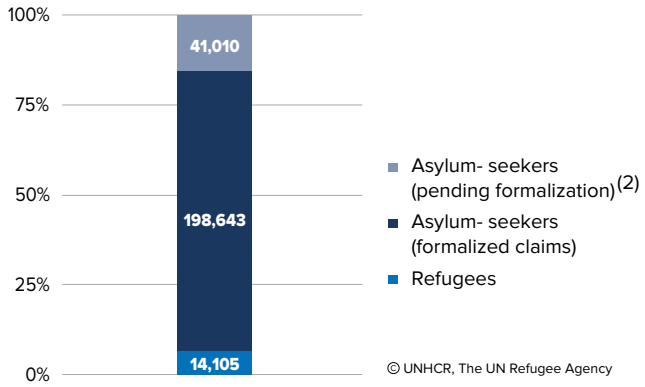
253,758.00 224,208.00 (NIC)	Total of people in need of international protection
239,653.00 217,125.00 (NIC)	Asylum-seeker estimate
14,105.00 7,083.00 (NIC)	Recognized refugees

Number of people registered by UNHCR Costa Rica 2023



Source: UNHCR - Own data (ProGres database v4) - Being registered in proGres is a requirement for all UNHCR assistance programs -

Total Caseload Distribution December 2022



1) Includes recognized stateless and persons pending recognition of their stateless claims.
(2) Persons who have made an appointment with the Refugee Unit to file an asylum claim.

Sources: Migration Authority (Refugee Unit), CVVR, Administrative Migration Tribunal, National Registry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNHCR Costa Rica.

Assistance provided by UNHCR*

USD 470,753 Total awarded through cash assistance	**1,710** **627 hogares** Total individuals having benefited from cash assistance	**69,315**** Number of people active in the UNHCR registration system	**14,237** Total people who received information about UNHCR programs	**44,830** Total assistances given by UNHCR

*Accumulated from January to *July 2023*
** Accumulated up to *July 2023*

World Refugee Day: A Festival from North to South in Costa Rica

Music, food, arts and crafts, and a bicycle race.

Nicaraguan artist Ceshia Ubau performed with Malpaís. Roberto Carlos Sánchez/UNHCR

Entrepreneurs sold traditional food and artisanal products. Roberto Carlos Sánchez/UNHCR

Families and kids enjoyed UCR's Art's Bus show in Upala. Natalia Díaz/ACNUR

Under the theme ***"El festival que nos une",*** UNHCR organized two weeks of artistic, cultural, and sports activities in San José and the border communities. Hundreds of people commemorated World Refugee Day alongside UNHCR.

The agenda kicked off with a well-attended documentary film screening at the cinema center (Centro de Producción Cinematográfica). The documentary Casa en Tierra Ajena , directed by Ivannia Salazar and based on a book by academic researcher Carlos Sandoval, showed the recent history of forced displacement in Central America and reflected on its impact on local communities. The documentary is open to all public and can be seen here.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkrZIumTRjI

After the documentary, UNHCR presented the report: Global Trends on Forced Displacement in 2022. Costa Rica is highlighted in the Report as the third country globally receiving the highest number of new asylum applications in 2022, only surpassed by United States of America and Germany. The full Report can be download here.

https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022

On Saturday, June 17, the Ministry of Culture (CENAC) in San José was the stage of World Refugee Day activities. Assistants enjoyed a day of arts, music, theater, gastronomy, and an entrepreneur fair with businesses run by refugees and asylum seekers. At the Teatro 1887 and Teatro de la Danza, UNHCR hosted both a theater workshop with refugee women, and an awareness space with legal facilitators, this activity was jointly organized with the National Commission for the Improvement of Justice Administration (CONAMAJ).

At sunset, Nicaraguan singer and songwriter Ceshia Ubau delighted the audience with a great concert with her most popular songs and a few new hits. Costa Rican band Malpaís closed the concert with their greatest hits making all participants sing along. For the grand finale, Ceshia was invited to join Malpaís on stage and together played one of Nicaragua's most touching songs, Carlos Mejía Godoy's "***Nicaragua, Nicaragüita"*** for a fantastic and very emotional end.

Entrepreneurs sold traditional food and artisanal products.
Roberto Carlos Sánchez/UNHCR

INS building was illuminated for WRD alongside Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Banco Nacional buildings in San José.
Austin Ramírez/ACNUR

On June 20th, UNHCR held a protocolar event at Costa Rica´s National Museum. The event was attended by high-rank government officials, diplomatic corps, civil society representatives including UNHCR´s partners, private sector allies and UNHCR´s 2022 Regional Nansen Award Winner, Vicenta Gonzalez. During the event, a representative of the refugee population in Costa Rica delivered a heart-felt speech that helped all participants to better understand the plea of refugees in Costa Rica, particularly those coming from Nicaragua.

UNHCR also inaugurated a visual exhibition with art created by refugee families that included their insights for been forced to flee their countries and how their integration process in Costa Rica has been. The exhibition also portraits their fears, dreams, and goals in their new home.

> ***"Despite the tragedy of uprooting, refugees find the strength to restart their lives from scratch in a new place. Today, we want to highlight their courage and contributions to their host country through their work, service, culture, and art,*** said UNHCR's representative for Costa Rica, Milton Moreno. ***"***

UN resident coordinator Allegra Baiocchi at the National Museum.
Natalia Díaz/ACNUR

The border communities also joined in the commemoration. On Sunday, the 25th, UNHCR organized a bicycle race with over 120 participants who enjoyed a scenic route in Paso Canoas, Puntarenas.

The bicycle race started at Paso Canoas.
Austin Ramírez/ACNUR

In Upala, UNHCR set up a second cultural festival with music, theater and entrepreneur fair featuring 30 businesses took place near the community park. Participants enjoyed traditional food, inflatables for children and performances by the Arts´ Bus from the University of Costa Rica. To close the event, the Concert Band from Limon offered a very lively concert that put everyone to dance.

UNHCR joined the Minister of security on a field visit to the southern border

On July 8th, UNHCR actively participated in a joint field visit to Costa Rica's southern border. This crucial mission was undertaken alongside Minister of Security Mario Zamora, shedding light on the pressing challenges and opportunities related to human mobility in the region.

The field mission comprised strategic stops at key border crossing points in the southern zone. In Paso Canoas, the Minister visited UNHCR's post, where he shared valuable insights into the critical humanitarian assistance and protection being offered. These services are catered to the rising influx of family groups and other individuals seeking entry into the country.

UNHCR used this opportunity to present concrete actions taken to ensure the presence of key partners offering information and attention to the most vulnerable.

Zamora emphasized the Government's efforts to address mixed movements arriving through the southern border and underscored some of the remaining challenges. For instance, during the group's visit to Sixaola the lack of infrastructure was evidently insufficient to handle the increasing number of asylum seekers and migrants' entering the country. This issue has sparked a new line of dialogue for potential collaborative actions between the Government of Costa Rica and UNHCR.

The field visit was very productive, drawing the authorities´ attention to the crucial work being done on the ground to address the plight of refugees and asylum seekers while highlighting areas that demand urgent attention and collaboration for an effective national response.

During the visit, Minister Zamora engaged in constructive discussions with UNHCR Representative to address the country's complex human mobility challenges. Together, they reflected on UNHCR's important support in shaping Costa Rica's national response to refugees and asylum seekers.

Courtesy of Security Ministry.

UNHCR donated mosquito nets to mitigate Malaria outbreak

Vanessa Alpízar Ruiz/UNHCR

In April, UNHCR donated 1,323 mosquito nets to support the efforts of the Ministry of Health to stop the malaria outbreak affecting Limon and Los Chiles. These nets were distributed in the communities of Medio Queso, Coquital, and San Gerardo in Los Chiles, in the northern border.

UNHCR's Field Office in Upala managed this donation in recognition of the dire situation faced by border communities with the increase of Anopheles mosquitoes carrying malaria.

> "Vivian Nieme, Head of the UNHCR office in Upala, said, ***This donation strengthens community's efforts in preventing malaria, benefiting both nationals, refugees and asylum-seekers equally.***"

This initiative further demonstrates UNHCR's commitment to support and empower host communities in Costa Rica. In 2021, the agency had also provided mosquito nets to the community of Isla Chica, also located in Los Chiles.

US Embassy and UNHCR donated two Mobile Units to the Refugee Unit

As part of World Refugee Day activities, the Embassy of the United States of America in San Jose donated two fully equipped trucks to the Refugee Unit. These Mobile Refugee Units (MRUs) will allow the authorities to bring services to remote communities all over the country.

The MRUs are equipped with non-slip flooring, an electric generator, a metallic access ramp with non-slip material, and safety railings, among other accessibility features, to assist elderly individuals and people with physical disabilities. Both MRUs are valued in USD $175,000

> *"This wonderful project will allow the DGME to offer international protection to the most remote communities and reach those who have difficulties traveling to the regional or central offices of the DGME,* stated the UNHCR representative for Costa Rica, Milton Moreno.
>
> *"*

Austin Ramírez/UNHCR

Austin Ramírez/UNHCR

U.S. Ambassador in Costa Rica, Cynthia Telles, reaffirmed her commitment to continue assisting Costa Rica to meet the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers.

The donation event was chaired by the Minister of Security, Mario Zamora, who stressed the importance that persons in need can access international protection. Zamora also highlighted the essential role of the US Embassy and UNHCR in Costa Rica´s response to human mobility.

A Refugee Woman Stands Out in a UN Book with UNHCR

Austin Ramírez Reyes/UNHCR

Alba* is a Nicaraguan asylum-seeker who fled to Costa Rica after becoming a victim of sexual and gender-based violence. Her story is featured alongside 14 other women in the book ***"Soy Mujer en Costa Rica y esta es mi historia",*** (I am a woman in Costa Rica and this is my story), a project in which UNHCR collaborated with other agencies from the United Nations System.

The book was presented during International Women's Day, on March 8th.

In addition to sharing Alba's story, UNHCR also participated in various events coordinated in the northern zone. For instance, through the Field Office in Upala, UNHCR was represented at different events organized by women's collectives in Upala and Los Chiles cantons, as well as other border communities.

You can download the book at this link and read Alba's story.

https://costarica.un.org/es/222291-soy-mujer-en-costa-rica-y-esta-es-mi-historia

Shelter in San José Received Medical Renovations

In April, UNHCR gave a donation to **Casa María Auxiliadora** to enhance their health services. Casa María Auxiliadora is a catholic-based organization that offers services such as daily meals, counseling and health attention to asylum seekers and migrants in Don Bosco, a neighborhood near San José downtown.

UNHCR donated a hospital bed, six walking canes, 104 crutches, and 25 wheelchairs, among other instruments and medical equipment. The list also includes a sphygmomanometer to measure blood pressure, a complete diagnostic kit, a pulse oximeter, portable vital signs monitor, magnetotherapy equipment, a general examination lamp, a digital thermometer, a portable nebulizer, an electrocardiograph machine, and specula.

Furthermore, to ensure healthcare access for those in need of international protection, UNHCR and Casa María Auxiliadora established an arrangement to facilitate medical referrals for cases that require new admission under the UNHCR-CCSS agreement.

> *"This donation will help people in extreme health vulnerability. For those who had to flee, it represents an option to access healthcare,* said María José Barth, Health Officer at UNHCR Costa Rica. *"*

UNHCR/Luis Roberto Solano

New alliance with the private sector

Melissa Williams Aguilar/UNHCR

UNHCR Costa Rica launched its latest private sector alliance with an open awareness workshop at the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) business center. In total, 25 employees from all levels of their organization participated in the activity on February 15th.

BCG is a global consulting firm working in Costa Rica since 2022 and aims to increase its workforce to 400 employees by 2024.

UNHCR and its partner agency, Fundación Mujer, delivered presentations on topics related to refugee and asylum-seeker sensitivities. Of particular importance, the workshop featured a presentation by Indira Mayorga, one of the individuals served by UNHCR. Mayorga volunteered her insights for a video interview, which became the highlight of the event.

The alliance with BCG not only holds great potential for future projects with our new partner agency, the Omar Dengo Foundation, but also for building value chains for entrepreneurs—a practice on which BCG has already been working.

Canada Will Continue Funding UNHCR Assistance

On March 3, UNHCR Costa Rica received the visit of Juliana Cassini, Senior Policy Analyst from the International and Intergovernmental Relations Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

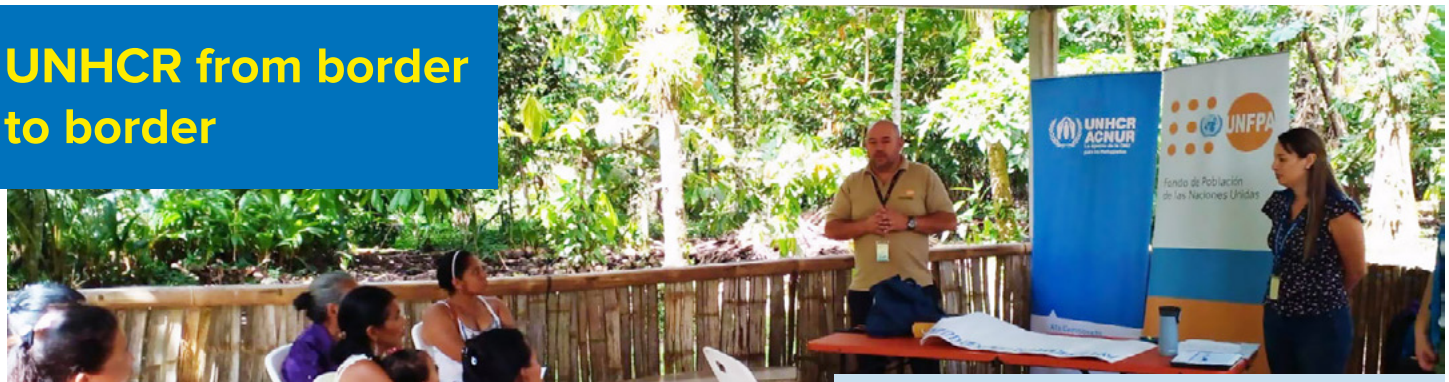
Ms. Cassini had the opportunity to visit the Refugee Unit and met with Allan Rodriguez, former Deputy Director of the Migration Authority, and Jessica Soto, acting Coordinator of the Refugee Unit, to understand their vision regarding recent changes in the Refugee Status Determination procedures.

She also met with UNHCR Representative Milton Moreno to discuss how Canada can further assist Costa Rica´s response to refugee situation in Costa Rica. They both analyzed the possible impact of Executive Decrees (43.809-MGP and 43.810-MGP) and how UNHCR and Canada can assist the Migration Authority on its implementation. As part of the visit, IRCC informed Costa Rica of an extension of current activities and additional funding until 2025.

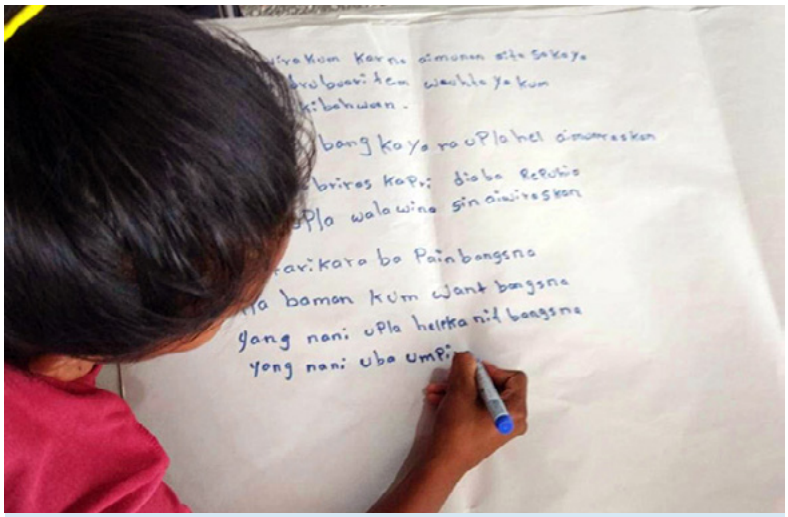
Finally, Ms. Cassini had the chance to monitor Canada's contribution to the Quality Assurance Initiative and the Multi-donor Digitalization Initiative. The latter is currently being implemented in Costa Rica to improve case processing and decision-making.

Irving Pérez/UNHCR

UNHCR from border to border



1. In January, UNHCR, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Ministry of Health offered a sexual and reproductive health workshop to female refugees and asylum-seekers. The workshop took place at a local association for women entrepreneurs called Asociación de Mujeres Emprendedoras de las Comunidades de Upala (AMECUP).



2. In March, UNHCR participated in an indigenous cultural gathering, the second Convivio Cultural Miskitu, in the northern zone. This participation was supported by our partner, *Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes.* UNHCR coordinated a participatory assesment with the Miskitu people.

3. In Paso Canoas, under UNHCR's tent on the southern border, Red Cross members provided first aid care.

5 y 6. UNHCR brought humanitarian aid to various communities in the northern zone, including remote areas of San Carlos and Upala.

USA and Costa Rica Implement Safe Mobility Offices

Since June 12, the governments of the United States and Costa Rica have initiated an exploratory phase of the Safe Mobility initiative. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will assist with this initiative as implementing partners. Both agencies will assist processing the applications, contacting those that meet the requirements and referring vulnerable cases to other protection pathways.

During this initial phase, only individuals from Nicaragua and Venezuela that were in Costa Rica prior June 12, 2023, and remain in the country will be considered.

A second phase will start on August 15th. For the second phase persons from Nicaragua and Venezuela will be able to submit their applications through the web site MovilidadSegura.org.

Access to Secure Mobility is completely free, and interviews will only be conducted with an appointment. No one can request payments or any type of favors in exchange for accessing to these services.

movilidad segura

Con el apoyo de UNHCR ACNUR La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados | OIM ONU MIGRACIÓN

For the latest information available go to movilidadsegura.org.

movilidadsegura.org

UNHCR appreciates the contributions of donor countries that contribute to Costa Rica and global programs with unermarked funds:

Updated to June 2023

UNHCR Costa Rica also appreciates the contributions of our private donors globally:

Australia / Japan / Republic of Korea / Spain

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