

Mexico

February 2024

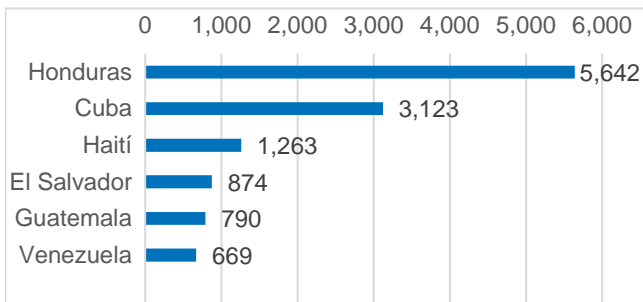
More than **13,000 persons** in Mexico applied for asylum so far in 2024. In 2023, Mexico received a record number of **140,000 asylum claims**. Since 2023, Mexico is amongst the **top five** countries with the highest number of new asylum claims worldwide.

The Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR) has quadrupled its processing capacity since 2018 with the support from UNHCR. **75 per cent** of all asylum claims in the country are filed in the South of Mexico and about **20 per cent** in Mexico City.

UNHCR's flagship **Local Integration Programme (PIL)** has provided relocation and integration assistance to more than **35,000 recognized refugees** since 2016, who are now working for over **600 private companies** in Mexico.

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS 2024

TOP NATIONALITIES

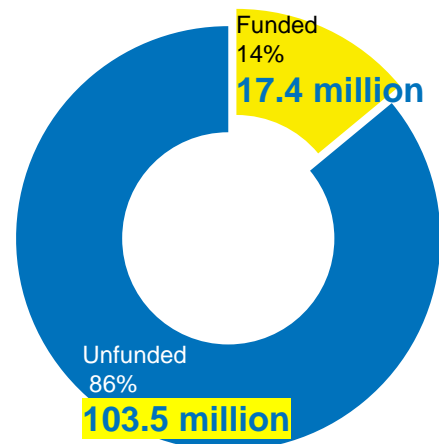


* Data available as of 22 February 2024. Due to the migration of data onto a new registration system, these figures may be subject to variation and may not therefore be considered final.

FUNDING (AS OF 31 JANUARY 2024)

USD 120.9 million

requested for Mexico in 2024



Operational Context

Mexico is among the **top five countries** worldwide receiving new asylum-seekers. It 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 persons** 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 a 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 persons 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 services and leading some people to continue their 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. Arrivals grew from **650 individuals** daily to a maximum of **4,000 individuals** per day in during the first weeks of October 2023. As of December 2023, more than **60 per cent** of all asylum claims were filed in Chiapas, while the whole south (Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz) accounted for more than **70 per cent** of all claims processed in the country. **Hondurans** are the main nationality in the south, followed by Cubans and Haitians.

Mexico City has seen an ever-growing number of asylum claims, accounting for more than **20 per cent¹** of all claims in the country. **Cubans** are the main nationality in Mexico City, followed by **Venezuelans** and **Haitians**. Shelters continue to be oversaturated, with the main shelter CAFEMIN working at **500 per cent** capacity. Given the overcrowding, an increasing number of persons, mainly families with children, are sleeping on the streets and exposed to high protection risks, such as **Gender-based Violence (GBV)**. Churches have opened their doors hosting more than **1,000 persons**.

In **Northern Mexico**, there are more than **8,000 persons** on the move living in shelters and informal settlements. It is important to note that most of the population lives in private accommodation making the total number even higher. Low temperatures, poor health and hygiene conditions are challenges for individuals currently living in **informal settlements and shelters** across the northern border. UNHCR is supporting shelters to improve their reception conditions with the delivery of core relief items, such as food, cleaning and hygiene products, dormitory and office equipment. Out of the asylum-seekers, Cubans are the main nationality in the north, followed by Haitians and Hondurans. There has been an increase of displaced Mexicans at the northern border, accounting for nearly half of the population on the move, e.g. in Matamoros.

Mexico experienced an increase in **internal displacement** in 2023, due to increased violence perpetrated by criminal groups and land disputes in at least **seven states**. According to the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH), more than **380,000 people** were displaced in Mexico by incidents of violence between 2006 and the end of 2022. Preliminary data from the CMDPDH estimates that, from January to November 2023, there were at least **42 mass displacement events** with at least **20 people** displaced by violence, which generated at least **10,850 internally displaced persons (IDPs)**.

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 **30 funded partners** across the country, UNHCR continues to strengthen its network to enhance coordination in the areas of protection and durable solutions. Almost **40 agreements** are also in place with authorities of federal and local governments, academic institutions, and the private sector. UNHCR's presence is especially strong in

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.

the field, where enhanced dialogue and collaboration mechanisms are established with state and municipality government authorities. Over **600 private sector companies** partner with 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.

The government of Mexico submitted **eight pledges** at the second **Global Refugee Forum (GRF)** which took place in December 2023 in Geneva, **four** of which are federal and **four** were made by state or municipal authorities. Follow-up to the implementation of the pledges will be carried out in 2024. To strengthen coordination among actors implementing the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework in Mexico (or MIRPS in Spanish), an inter-ministerial roundtable on the inclusion and integration of refugees was set up jointly with COMAR, bringing together government entities, UN agencies, and development actors.

Key Priorities

Ensuring access to protection and protection responses

UNHCR provides technical support to COMAR through the **Quality Asylum Initiative** 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 Agency continues to advocate for the correct interpretation of Refugee Status Determination standards.

It is a priority for UNHCR to give persons 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 almost **90 lawyers, some 60 paralegals** and more than **40 public defenders** strategically placed in over **30 cities** across the country, UNHCR provides protection counselling and orientation, 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. At the same time, UNHCR works with almost **20 human rights clinics** in universities in Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chiapas, Coahuila, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Monterrey, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco and Veracruz. In 2023, paralegals and lawyers reached more than **230,000 people** with information, legal advice and legal 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, particularly for cases who face protection challenges in the first country of asylum. 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 almost **150 cases** to Canada and the United States in 2023, representing more than **450 persons**. Some "emergency" priority cases were submitted to Australia.

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. Communication with Communities is a focus for UNHCR Mexico. More than **35,000 queries** were answered through the Helpdesk team in **2023**. During 2023, El Jaguar reached more than **4.5 million Facebook users** (a monthly average of **386,000 users**), registered almost **7.5 million visits** to its page (a monthly average of **619,000 visits**) and its publications generated more than **330,000 interactions** (a monthly average of **28,000 interactions**).

Meaningful participation is key to ensure a conducive protection environment. Therefore, UNHCR 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 meaningful participation of refugees in meaningful events in the international arena. Examples are the **GRF** in which several refugee women participated, and two Venezuelan young athletes having been pre-selected for the **Olympic Team**.

Reception conditions and access to services with attention to specific needs

In Mexico, **shelters** play a central 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 **16 shelters** and **two shelter networks**, UNHCR ensured that more than **180,000 persons** accessed comprehensive assistance in 2023, including adequate housing, medical care and psychosocial support. In close collaboration with ICRC, IOM and UNICEF, UNHCR supported **124 shelters** in 2023 through infrastructure improvement, staffing, distribution of Non-Food Items and capacity building. In 2023, UNHCR implemented the spotlight protection tool across **102** of the **132 shelters**. UNHCR prioritizes shelters with a yellow or red result for protection interventions.

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 basic needs during their asylum process. In 2023, almost **17,000 people** were assisted (new beneficiaries) through cash-based interventions (CBIs) as part of this Humanitarian Assistance Program. In terms of the Humanitarian Assistance programme, the operation closed the year having assisted almost **17,000 individuals** with a total of **US\$4 million**. Considering all CBIs including sectorial grants for Protection and Durable Solutions, UNHCR assisted almost **41,000 beneficiaries** with a total amount of **US\$8.1 million**.

UNHCR has strengthened the inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system to address their specific needs and ensure timely and comprehensive protection responses, in close coordination with UNICEF. In addition, UNHCR is improving reception conditions and access to asylum for children and advocating for the eradicating the detention of children on the move. Through its partners, UNHCR seeks to ensure alternative care arrangements for asylum-seeking and refugee children, including educational activities and school enrolment. In partnership with Save the Children, UNHCR implemented psychosocial and recreational activities for more than **9,000 children** in **twelve child-friendly spaces** in shelters across the country. To prevent family violence, UNHCR also supports peaceful coexistence activities and positive parenting strategies. UNHCR and Save the Children provided specialized case management services to almost **1,300 asylum-seeking and refugee children** and referred them to **Child Protection Authorities (CPA)** and other services to ensure their access to education and other programs.

UNHCR seeks to increase community awareness and prevent the risk of **Gender-based Violence** through capacity-building and coordination with partners. In 2023, UNHCR's specialized partners provided a quality multi-sectoral response to over **1,500 GBV survivors**. As part of the GBV risk mitigation strategy, UNHCR partners are evaluated according to IASC standards on protection against **sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)**. Regarding technical capacity-building on GBV in 2023, **440 UNHCR staff members as well as staff from partners, key government counterparts and other organizations** were trained on GBV issues, including safe disclosure, interview techniques and quality case management. **750 staff members, partner staff and key counterparts** were trained on protection from PSEA in 2023.

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**. Some **8,000 persons** joined the programme in 2023. Once relocated, UNHCR accompanies participants to access employment, long-term accommodation, education, and health services. In 2022 alone, almost **13,000 refugees** were supported with relocation and integration assistance – the highest number supported in a year to date. Since its inception in 2016, more than **37,000 persons** have benefited from this assistance. An additional **100,000 individuals** have been assisted with *in-situ* integration. UNHCR has cooperation agreements with federal and state authorities, employment offices, and over **600 private companies** hiring refugees. Recent studies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimate that a total of **US\$10.9 million** of tax contributions per year were generated by the first **35,000 participants** of the program.

UNHCR supports young refugees to access higher education in Mexico. Under the **Global DAFI Programme**, more than **60 students** were supported in 2023, with **15 DAFI students** graduating the same year. UNHCR and partners supported another **120 students** within its tertiary education programme, including more than **50 per cent** women. As part of the programme, **32 students** were referred to university programmes.

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 has provided technical assistance to all three branches of government. Since 2020, UNHCR coordinated with various UN agencies for the review and formulation of joint observations on a General Law initiative on the matter, which was approved by the Chamber of Deputies and is currently before the Senate for analysis.

UNHCR and OHCHR collaborated with the Migration Policy, Registration, and Identity of Persons Unit (UPMRIP) to organize the **International Meeting on Human Mobility 2023**. As part of this initiative, they facilitated the academic visit of the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Paula Gaviria Betancur. During her visit, Ms. Gaviria presented a report authored by her predecessor, which was initially delivered during an official visit to Mexico in 2022. The Special Rapporteur's report highlights the multifaceted causes of internal displacement, including violence from organized crime, land conflicts or climate change. It also stated that internal displacement predominantly affects **indigenous Peoples, women and girls, children, relatives of disappeared persons, human rights defenders, journalists, and LGBTIQ+ persons**.

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. Together with UPMRIP of the Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR is developing a **guide for registration and referral pathways for IDPs** at the national level to support the authorities. UNHCR 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.

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 damages Hurricane Otis left in Acapulco and Coyuca, Guerrero in October 2023, 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 January 2024, UNHCR Mexico is **14 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.

Special thanks **all our donors in 2024** (as of 20 February):



Private donors Mexico | Private donors United States of America

Likewise, UNHCR thanks all our individual donors that every month contribute to our mission.

Read more at : [UNHCR Mexico Website](#); [Mexico Global Focus](#); [Mexico Data Portal](#); [Global Appeal 2024](#); [Twitter](#).