UNHCR ACNUR
La Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados

El Salvador

April 2024

Operational Update #4

People from all ages in Santa Lucía, Mejicanos gathered for the inauguration of the *Graffitour*, an initiative seeking to boost urban tourism in the community, which was historically stigmatized by violence.
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Key figures

Community-based protection

530 individuals assisted through UNHCR's helpline in April, and 1,672 in 2024.

452 people assisted at the Support Spaces in April, and 1,536 in 2024.

6,060 people reached via Support Spaces mobile units in April, and 26,337 in 2024.

*These figures are updated regularly and may change.

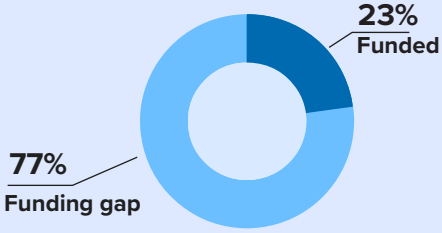
Cash assistance

283 households (977 individuals) at heightened risk received cash assistance in April, and 606 households (2,050 individuals) in 2024. This support helps cover basic needs and facilitates livelihoods and education.

Registration

199 people registered with biometrics in April, and 1,081 in 2024.

Funding



23% of UNHCR's financial requirements for El Salvador received by 30 April 2024.

Highlights

- UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participated in the first stone-laying event for the construction of new reception and interview offices for the National Commission for the Determination of Refugee Status (CODER). This new space, built with UNHCR's support, will be exclusively dedicated to asylum-seekers and refugees seeking services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The inauguration of the space is expected in the second semester of 2024.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador and UNHCR's Representative during the first stone-laying event of the new interview offices for CODER.
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- Fifty community leaders from San Salvador began their training under the 2024 School of Human Rights, Leadership, and Community Organization, launched by UNHCR and FUNDASAL. Partners World Vision and COMCAVIS Trans joined the initial session, which focused on human rights and international protection.

- UNHCR and the Directorate for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion launched the *Graffitour* project in Santa Lucía, Mejicanos, in the framework of the International Art Day. This project aims to boost urban tourism through renovated spaces and economic activation.

Protect

- UNHCR and FUNDASAL convened the first annual meeting with the national community group of refugees and asylum-seekers. Participants are residents from Cabañas, Chalatenango, La Unión, San Salvador, and Sonsonate, and will gather once a month. As presented in the meeting, the 2024 workplan will cover community organization, project management, World Refugee Day activities, among other initiatives.

Respond

- Members from 12 communities in Santa Ana, San Miguel, San Salvador, and Soyapango attended conflict resolution workshops organized by UNHCR and World Vision. Over 150 individuals gained a better understanding of tools and mechanisms for identifying and resolving communal conflicts, fostering cooperation, and enhancing peaceful coexistence.

- UNHCR and the General Directorate for Civil Protection held a three-day workshop on disaster risk management as part of climate change initiatives. Twenty-two participants from partner organizations Wold Vision, COMCAVIS Trans, and FUNDASAL, along staff from Civil Protection, and UNHCR's outreach volunteers, learned about risk identification, communal commissions, risk mapping, and early warning mechanisms.

Staff from UNHCR partner organizations during a workshop held by Civil Protection and UNHCR on disaster risk management.
© UNHCR / Mariana Colocho

Empower

- Two hundred Judicial Facilitators and 22 peace judges from Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, and Sonsonate enhanced their knowledge of internal displacement and international protection through a workshop organized by the Supreme Court of Justice with UNHCR support. During the sessions, UNHCR provided information on identifying people with specific needs and referral pathways. Similar workshops will continue throughout the year in other departments, aiming to reach more than 700 judicial facilitators.

Judicial Facilitators from the Supreme Court of Justice participating in protection workshops organized by UNHCR.
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- Along partners COMCAVIS Trans, FUNDASAL, and World Vision, UNHCR launched local mappings with 43 prioritized communities and seven community groups. This exercise boosts community capacities to identify protection risks, available services, needs, existing community structures and actors.

Solve

- As part of Súper Pilas livelihoods programme, 47 entrepreneurs from La Paz, San Salvador, Santa Ana, and San Miguel presented their business ideas outlined following the ILO's methodology, IMESUN. The evaluation panel, which includes UNHCR and invited organizations, will identify proposals receiving seed capital. Also, 26 participants from Santa Ana began this programme aimed to support them in formulating life plans.

- UNHCR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MTPS by its acronym in Spanish) and with the support of World Vision, conducted the second 2024 Youth Employment Route of the My First Job programme. Fourteen asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and at-risk youth from San Salvador and Santa Ana participated in workshops facilitated by job specialists on soft skills and abilities for employment.

Participants of the My First Job Programme during an employment route in San Salvador.
© UNHCR

Stories from the field

The power of education to rebuilding lives

Through an entrepreneurship course supported by UNHCR, Bryan found hope to rebuild his life after fleeing his home due to violence.
© FÉ Y ALEGRÍA

"It's difficult to start anew. I felt hopeless," shared Bryan, a 35-year-old man from El Salvador. Life in a gang-controlled community was a constant challenge. Despite having steady employment and being a university student, his life took a drastic turn in 2019 when he received death threats for refusing to pay extortion. Staying was no longer an option.

Bryan wore his work uniform to escape unnoticed, making it seem like just another day. "That day, I lost everything, including my job," he recalls. Upon arriving in a new community, he felt desolate. Unable to continue his studies on marketing, he struggled with finding a livelihood. His mental health suffered as well; he felt anger and found it impossible to make plans.

A friend told Bryan about "Creating Opportunities", a UNHCR-supported programme by partner Fe y Alegría. Following the International Labour Organization's (ILO) "Start and Improve Your Business" (SIYB) methodology, the programme aims to transform lives through education and fostering entrepreneurship. For Bryan, Creating Opportunities was a turning point.

"The emotional support from friends and mentors was crucial to starting anew," he reflects. The programme helped Bryan rediscover and define his life goals, significantly boosting his confidence. Since its inception, more than 800 individuals, have completed Creating Opportunities technical training adapted to their abilities and aspirations.

Bryan currently runs a chicken farm that generates income, allowing him to dream bigger. "I dream of owning a large company where I can employ others who have lived through similar situations," he asserts emotionally.

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

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

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